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RENAISSANCE IN ITALY

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ITALIAN LITERATURE

In Two Parts

BY

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

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'STUDIES OF THE GREEK POETS' 'SKETCHES IN ITALY AND GREECE' ETC.

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PART I.

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PREFACE.

THIS work on the Renaissance in Italy, of which I now give the last two volumes to the public, was designed and executed on the plan of an essay or analytical enquiry, rather than on that which is appropriate to a continuous history. Each of its four parts—the *Age of the Despots*, the *Revival of Learning*, the *Fine Arts*, and *Italian Literature*—stood in my mind for a section; each chapter for a paragraph; each paragraph for a sentence. At the same time, it was intended to make the first three parts subsidiary and introductory to the fourth, for which accordingly a wider space and a more minute method of treatment were reserved. The first volume was meant to explain the social and political conditions of Italy; the second to relate the exploration of the classical past which those conditions necessitated, and which determined the intellectual activity of the Italians; the third to exhibit the bias of this people toward figurative art, and briefly to touch upon its various manifestations; in order that, finally, a correct point of view might be obtained for judging of their national literature in its strength and limita-

tions. Literature must always prove the surest guide to the investigator of a people's character at some decisive epoch. To literature, therefore, I felt that the plan of my book allowed me to devote two volumes.

The subject of my enquiry rendered the method I have described, not only natural but necessary. Yet there are special disadvantages, to which progressive history is not liable, in publishing a book of this sort by instalments. Readers of the earlier parts cannot form a just conception of the scope and object of the whole. They cannot perceive the relation of its several sections to each other, or give the author credit for his exercise of judgment in the marshalling and development of topics. They criticise each portion independently, and desire a comprehensiveness in parts, which would have been injurious to the total scheme. Furthermore, this kind of book sorely needs an Index, and its plan renders a general Index, such as will be found at the end of the last volume, more valuable than one made separately for each part.

Of these disadvantages I have been rendered sensible during the progress of publication through the last six years. Yet I have gained some compensation in the fact that the demand for a second edition of the first volume has enabled me to make that portion of the work more adequate.

With regard to authorities consulted in these two concluding volumes, I have special pleasure in record-

ing none—with only insignificant exceptions—but Italian names. The Italians have lately made vigorous strides in the direction of sound historical research and scientific literary criticism. It is not too much to say that the labours of this generation are rapidly creating a radical change in the views hitherto accepted concerning the origins and the development of Italian literature. Theories based on rational investigation and philosophical study are displacing the academical opinions of the last century. The Italians are forming for themselves a just conception of their past, at the same time that they are consolidating their newly-gained political unity.

To dwell upon the works of Francesco de Sanctis and Pasquale Villari is hardly necessary here. The former is perhaps less illustrious by official dignity than by his eloquent *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*. The latter has gained European reputation as the biographer of Savonarola and Machiavelli, the historian of Florence at their epoch. But English readers are probably not so familiar with the acute and accurate criticism of Giosuè Carducci; with the erudition of Alessandro d' Ancona, and the voluminous industry of the veteran Cesare Cantù; with the intelligence and facile pen of Adolfo Bartoli; with the philological researches of Napoleone Caix, and Francesco Fiorentino's philosophical studies; with Rajna's patient labours in one branch of literary history, and Monaci's discoveries in another; with the miscellaneous contri-

butions to scholarship and learning made by men like Comparetti, Guasti, D' Ovidio, Rubieri, Milanesi, Campori, Passano, Biagi, Pitré, Tigri, Vigo, Giudici, Fracassetti, Fanfani, Bonghi, Grion, Mussafia, Morsolin, Del Lungo, Virgili. While alluding thus briefly to students and writers, I should be sorry to omit the names of those publishers—the Florentine Lemonnier, Barbèra, Sansoni; the Neapolitan Morano; the Palermitan Lauriel; the Pisan Vico and Nistri; the Bolognese Romagnoli and Zanichelli—through whose spirited energy so many works of erudition have seen the light.

I have mentioned names almost at random, passing over (not through forgetfulness, but because space compels me) many writers to whom I owe weighty obligations. The notes and references in these volumes will, I trust, contain acknowledgment sufficient to atone for omissions in this place.

Not a few of these distinguished men hold professorial appointments; and it is clear that they are forming students in the great Italian cities, to continue and complete their labours. Very much remains to be explored in the field of Italian literary history. The future promises a harvest of discovery scarcely less rich than that of the last half-century. On many moot points we can at present express but partial or provisional judgments. The historian of the Renaissance must feel that his work, when soundest, may be doomed to be superseded, and when freshest, will ere

long seem antiquated. So rapid is the intellectual movement now taking place in Italy.

In conclusion, it remains for me to add that certain passages in Chapter II. have been reproduced from an article by me in the *Quarterly Review*, while some translations from Poliziano and Boiardo, together with portions of the critical remarks upon those poets, were first published, a few years since, in the *Fortnightly Review*. From the *Fortnightly Review*, again, I have extracted the translation of ten sonnets by Folgore da San Gemignano.

In quoting from Italian writers, in the course of this literary history, I have found it best to follow no uniform plan; but, as each occasion demanded, I have given the Italian text, or else an English version, or in some cases both the original and a translation. To explain the motives for my decision in every particular, would involve too much expenditure of space. I may, however, add that the verse-translations in these volumes are all from my pen, and have been made at various times for the special purpose of this work.

DAVOS: *March*, 1881.

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RENAISSANCE IN ITALY.

CHAPTER I.

THE ORIGINS.

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BETWEEN 1300, the date of Dante's vision, and 1530, the date of the fall of Florence, the greatest work of the Italians in art and literature was accomplished. These two hundred and thirty years may be divided into three nearly equal periods. The first ends with Boccaccio's death in 1375. The second lasts until the birth of Lorenzo de' Medici in 1448. The third embraces the golden age of the Renaissance. In the first period Italian literature was formed. In the second

intervened the studies of the humanists. In the third, these studies were carried over to the profit of the mother tongue. The first period extends over seventy-five years; the second over seventy-three; the third over eighty-two. With the first date, 1300, we may connect the jubilee of Boniface and the translation of the Papal See to Avignon (1304); with the second, 1375, the formation of the Albizzi oligarchy in Florence (1381); with the third, 1448, the capture of Constantinople (1453); and with the fourth, 1530, the death of Ariosto (1533) and the new direction given to the Papal policy by the Sack of Rome (1527).

The chronological limits assigned to the Italian Renaissance in the first volume of this book would confine the history of literature to about eighty years between 1453 and 1527; and it will be seen by reference to the foregoing paragraph that it would not be impossible to isolate that span of time. In dealing with Renaissance literature, it so happens that strict boundaries can be better observed than in the case of politics, fine arts, or learning. Yet to adhere to this section of literary history without adverting to the antecedent periods, would be to break the chain of national development, which in the evolution of the Italian language is even more important than in any other branch of culture. If the renascence of the arts must be traced from Cimabue and Pisano, the spirit of the race, as it expressed itself in modern speech, demands a still more retrogressive survey, in order to render the account of its ultimate results intelligible.

The first and most brilliant age of Italian literature ended with Boccaccio, who traced the lines on which the future labours of the nation were conducted. It was succeeded by nearly a century of Greek and Latin scholarship. To study the masterpieces of Dante and Petrarch, or to practise their language, was thought beneath the dignity of men like Valla, Poggio, or Pontano. But toward the close of the fifteenth century, chiefly through the influence of Lorenzo de' Medici and his courtiers, a strong interest in the mother-tongue revived. Therefore the vernacular literature of the Renaissance, as compared with that of the expiring middle ages, was itself a renascence or revival. It reverted to the models furnished by Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, and combined them with the classics, which had for so long a while eclipsed their fame. Before proceeding to trace the course of this revival, which forms the special subject of these volumes, it will be needful to review the literature of the fourteenth century, and to show under what forms that literature survived among the people during the classical enthusiasm of the fifteenth century. Only by this antecedent investigation can the new direction taken by the genius of the combined Italian nation, after the decline of scholarship, be understood. Thus the three sub-periods of the 230 years above described may be severally named the medieval, the humanistic, and the renascent. To demonstrate their connection and final explication is my purpose in this last section of my work on the Renaissance.

In the development of a modern language Italy showed less precocity than other European nations.

The causes of this tardiness are not far to seek. Latin, the universal tongue of medieval culture, lay closer to the dialects of the peninsula than to the native speech of Celtic and Teutonic races, for whom the official language of the Empire and the Church always exhibited a foreign character. In Italy the ancient speech of culture was at home; and nothing had happened to weaken its supremacy. The literary needs of the Italians were satisfied with Latin; nor did the genius of the new people make a vigorous effort to fashion for itself a vehicle of utterance. Traditions of Roman education lingered in the Lombard cities, which boasted of secular schools, where grammarians and rhetoricians taught their art according to antique method, long after the culture of the North had passed into the hands of ecclesiastics.[1] When Charlemagne sought to resuscitate learning, he had recourse to these Italian teachers; and the importance of the distinction between Italians and Franks or Germans, in this respect, was felt so late as the eleventh century. Some verses in the Panegyric addressed by Wippo to the Emperor Henry III. brings the case so vividly before us that it may be worth while to transcribe them here[2]:

> Tunc fac edictum per terram Teutonicorum,
> Quilibet ut dives sibi natos instruat omnes

[1] See Giesebrecht, *De Litterarum studiis apud Italos primis medii ævi sæculis*, Berolini, 1845, p. 15.

[2] See Giesebrecht, *op. cit.* p. 19. Wippo recommends the Emperor to compel his subjects to educate their sons in letters and law. It was by such studies that ancient Rome acquired her greatness. In Italy at the present time, he says, all boys pass from the games of childhood into schools. It is only the Teutons who think it idle or disgraceful for a man to study unless he be intended for a clerical career.

Litterulis, legemque suam persuadeat illis,
Ut, cum principibus placitandi venerit usus,
Quisque suis libris exemplum proferat illis.
Moribus his dudum vivebat Roma decenter:
His studiis tantos potuit vincire tyrannos.
Hoc servant Itali post prima crepundia cuncti;
Et sudare scholis mandatur tota juventus.
Solis Teutonicis vacuum vel turpe videtur,
Ut doceant aliquem nisi clericus accipiatur.

While the Italians thus continued the rhetorical and legal studies of the ancients, they did not forget that they were representatives and descendants of the Romans. The Republic and the Empire were for them the two most glorious epochs of their own history; and any attempt which they made to revive either literature or art, was imitative of the past. They were not in the position to take a new departure. No popular epic, like the Niebelungen of the Teuton, the Arthurian legend of the Celt, the Song of Roland of the Frank, or the Spanish Cid, could have sprung up on Italian soil. The material was wanting to a race that knew its own antiquity. Even when an Italian undertook a digest of the Tale of Troy or of the Life of Alexander, he converted the metrical romances of the middle ages into prose, obeying an instinct which led him to regard the classical past as part of his own history.[1] In like manner, the recollection of a previous municipal organisation in the communes, together with the growing ideal of a Roman Empire, which should restore Italy to her place of sovereignty among the nations, proved serious obstacles to the unification of the people. We

[1] See Adolfo Bartoli, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, vol. i. pp. 142–158, and p. 167, on Guido delle Colonne and Qualichino da Spoleto.

have already seen that this reversion of the popular imagination to Rome may be reckoned among the reasons why the victory of Legnano and the Peace of Constance were comparatively fruitless.[1] Politically, socially, and intellectually, the Italians persisted in a dream of their Latin destiny, long after the feasibility of realising that vision had been destroyed, and when the modern era had already formed itself upon a new type in the federation of the younger races.

Of hardly less importance, as negative influences, were the failure of feudalism to take firm hold upon Italian soil, and the defect of its ideal, chivalry. The literature of trouvères, troubadours, and minnesingers grew up and flourished in the castles of the North; nor was it until the Italians, under the sway of the Hohenstauffen princes, possessed something analogous to a Provençal Court, that the right conditions for the development of literary art in the vernacular were attained. From this point of view Dante's phrase of *lingua aulica*, to express the dialect of culture, is both scientific and significant. It will further appear in the course of this chapter that the earliest dawn of Italian literature can be traced to those minor Courts of Piedmont and the Trevisan Marches, where the people borrowed the forms of feudal society more sympathetically than elsewhere in Italy.

It must moreover be remembered that during the eleventh and twelfth centuries the force of the Italian people was concentrated upon two great political struggles, the contest of the Church with the Empire, and the War of Lombard Independence. In the

[1] See above, vol i. *Age of the Despots*, 2nd ed. chap. 2

prosecution of these quarrels, the Italians lost sight of letters, art, theology. They became a race of statesmen and jurists. Their greatest divines and metaphysicians wandered northward into France and England. Their most famous university, that of Bologna, acquired a world-wide reputation as a school of jurisprudence. Legal studies and political activity occupied the attention of their ablest men. It would be difficult to overrate the magnitude of the work done during those two centuries. In the course of them, the Italians gave final form to the organism of the Papacy, which must be regarded as a product of their constructive genius. They developed republican governments of differing types in each of their great cities, and made, for the first time since the foundation of the Empire, the name of *People* sovereign. They resuscitated Roman law, and reorganised the commerce of the Mediterranean. Remaining loyal to the Empire as an idea, they shook off the yoke of the German Cæsars; and while the Papacy was their own handiwork, they, alone of European nations, viewed it politically rather than religiously, and so weakened it as to prepare the way for the Babylonian captivity at Avignon.

Thus, through the people's familiarity with Latin; through the survival of Roman grammar schools and the memory of Roman local institutions; through a paramount and all-pervading enthusiasm for the Roman past; through the lack of new legendary and epical material; through the failure of feudalism, and through the political ferment attending on the Wars of Investiture and Independence, the Italians were slow

to produce a modern language and a literature of modern type. They came late into the field; and when they took their place at last, their language presented a striking parallel to their political condition. As they failed to acquire a solid nationality, but remained split up into petty States, united by a Pan-Italic sentiment; so they failed to form a common speech. The written Italian of the future was used in its integrity by no one province; each district clinging to its dialect with obstinate pride.[1] Yet, though the race was tardy in literary development, and though the tongue of Ariosto has never become so thoroughly Italian as that of Shakspere is English or that of Molière is French; still, on their first appearance, the Italian masters proved themselves at once capable of work maturer and more monumental than any which had been produced in modern Europe. Their education during two centuries of strife was not without effect. The conditions of burghership in their free communes, the stirring of their political energies, the liberty of their *popolo*, and the keen sense of reality developed by their legal studies, prepared men like Dante and Guido Cavalcanti for solving the problems of art in a resolute, mature and manly spirit, fully conscious of the aim before them, and self-possessed in the assurance of adult faculties.

In the first, or, as it may be termed, the Latin

[1] The Italians did not even begin to reflect upon their *lingua volgare* until the special characters and temperaments of their chief States had been fixed and formed. In other words, their social and political development far anticipated their literary evolution. There remained no centre from which the vulgar tongue could radiate, absorbing local dialects. Each State was itself a centre, perpetuating dialect.

period of medieval culture, there was not much to distinguish the Italians from the rest of Europe. Those Lombard schools, of which mention has already been made, did indeed maintain the traditions of decadent classical education more alive than among the peoples of the North. Better Latin, and particularly more fluent Latin verse, was written during the dark ages in Italy than elsewhere.[1] Still it does not appear that the whole credit of medieval Latin hymnology and of its curious counterpart, the songs of the wandering students, should be attributed to the Italians. While we can refer the *Dies Iræ*, *Lauda Sion*, *Pange Lingua*, and *Stabat Mater* with tolerable certainty to Italian poets; while there is abundant internal evidence to prove that some of the best *Carmina Burana* were composed in Italy and under Italian influences; yet Paris, the focus of theological and ecclesiastical learning, as Bologna was the centre of legal studies, must be regarded as the headquarters of that literary movement which gave the rhyming hexameters of Bernard of Morlas and the lyrics of the Goliardi to Europe.[2] It seems clear that we cannot ascribe to the Italians of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries any superiority in the use of Latin over the schools of France. Their previous vantage-ground had been lost in the political distractions of their country. At the same time, they were the first jurists

[1] See Du Méril, *Poésies Populaires Latines antérieures au douzième Siècle*, Paris, 1843.

[2] Regarding the authorship of Latin hymns see the notes in Mone's *Hymni Latini Medii Ævi*, Friburgi Brisgoviæ, 1853, 3 vols. For the French origin of *Carmina Burana* see *Die lateinischen Vagantenlieder des Mittelalters*, von Oscar Hubatsch, Görlitz, 1870.

and the hardiest, if not the most philosophical, free-thinkers of Europe.

This is a point which demands at least a passing notice. Their practical studies, and the example of an emperor at war with Christendom, helped to form a sect of epicureans in Italy, for whom nothing sanctioned by ecclesiastical authority was sacred. To these pioneers of modern incredulity Dante assigned not the least striking Cantos of the *Inferno*. Their appearance in the thirteenth century, during the ascendancy of Latin culture, before the people had acquired a language, is one of the first manifestations of a national bias toward positive modes of thought and feeling, which we recognise alike in Boccaccio and Ariosto, Machiavelli and Guicciardini, Pomponazzi and the speculators of the South Italian School. It was the quality, in fact, which fitted the Italians for their work in the Renaissance. As metaphysicians in the stricter sense of that word, they have been surpassed by Northern races. Their religious sense has never been so vivid, nor their opposition to established creeds so earnest. But throughout modern history, their great men have manifested a practical and negative good sense, worldly in its moral tone, impervious to pietistic influences, antagonistic to mysticism, contented with concrete reality, which has distinguished them from the more fervent, boyish, sanguine, and imaginative enthusiasts of Northern Europe. We are tempted to speculate whether, as they were the heirs of ancient civility and grew up among the ruins of Roman greatness, so they were born spiritually old and disillusioned.

Another point which distinguished the Italians in this Latin period of their literature, was the absence of the legendary or myth-making faculty. It is not merely that they formed no epic, and gave birth to no great Saga; but they accepted the fabulous matter, transmitted to them from other nations, in a prosaic and positive spirit. This does not imply that they exercised a critical faculty, or passed judgment on the products of the medieval fancy. On the contrary, they took legend for fact, and treated it as the material of history. Hector, Alexander, and Attila were stripped of their romantic environments, and presented in the cold prose of a digest, as persons whose acts could be sententiously narrated. This attitude of the Italians toward the Saga is by no means insignificant. When their poets came to treat Arthurian or Carolingian fables in the epics of Orlando, they apprehended them in the same positive spirit, adding elements of irony and satire.

For the rest, the Italians shared with other nations the common stock of medieval literature—Chronicles, Encyclopædias, Epitomes, Moralisations, Histories in verse, Rhetorical Summaries, and prose abstracts of Universal History—the meagre *débris* and detritus of the huge moraines carried down by extinct classic glaciers. It is not needful to dwell upon this aspect of the national culture, since it presents no specific features. What is most to our purpose, is to note the affectionate remembrance of Rome and Roman worthies, which endured in each great town. The people, as distinguished from the feudal nobility, were and ever felt themselves to be the heirs of the old

Roman population. Therefore the soldiers on guard against the Huns at Modena in 924, sang in their barbarous Latin verse of Hector and the Capitol [1]:

Dum Hector vigil exstitit in Troïa,
Non eam cepit fraudulenta Græcia:
Prima quiete dormiente Troïa,
Laxavit Sinon fallax claustra perfida . . .
Vigili voce avis anser candida
Fugavit Gallos ex arce Romulea;
Pro qua virtute facta est argentea,
Et a Romanis adorata ut Dea.

The Tuscan women told tales of Troy and Catiline and Julius Cæsar [2]:

L'altra, traendo alla rocca la chioma,
Favoleggiava con la sua famiglia
De' Troiani e di Fiesole e di Roma.

A rhyming chronicler of Pisa compared the battles of the burghers against the Saracens with the Punic wars. The tomb of Virgil at Naples was an object for pilgrimage, and one of the few spots round which a group of local legends clustered. The memory of Livy added lustre to Padua, and Mussato boasted that her walls, like those of Troy, her mother-city, were sacrosanct. The memory of the Plinies ennobled Como, that of Ovid gave glory to Sulmona, that of Tully to Arpino. Florence clung to the mutilated statue of Mars upon her bridge with almost superstitious reverence, as proof of Roman origin; while Siena adopted for her ensign the she-wolf and the Roman twins. Pagan customs survived, and were jealously maintained in the central and southern provinces; and the name of the Republic sufficed to stir Arnold's

[1] Du Méril, *op. cit.* p. 268. [2] Dante, *Paradiso*, xv.

revolution in Rome, long before the days of Rienzi. To the mighty German potentate, King Frederick Barbarossa, attended with his Northern chivalry, a handful of Romans dared to say: 'Thou wast a stranger; I, the City, gave thee civic rights. Thou camest from transalpine regions; I have conferred on thee the principality.'[1] It would be easy to multiply these instances. Enough, however, has been said to show that through the gloom of medieval history, before humanism had begun to dawn, and while the other nations were creating legends and popular epics, Italy maintained a dim but tenacious sense of her Roman past. This consciousness has here to be insisted on, not merely because it stood in the way of mythopœic activity, but because it found full and proper satisfaction in that Revival of Learning which decided the Renaissance.

While the Italians were fighting the Wars of Investiture and Independence, two literatures had arisen in the country which we now call France. Two languages, the *langue d'oc* and the *langue d'oïl*, gave birth to two separate species of poetry. The master-product of the latter was the Song of Roland, which, together with the after-birth of Arthurian romance, flooded Europe with narratives, embodying in a more or less epical form the ideals, enthusiasms, and social creed of Chivalry. The former, cultivated in the southern provinces that border on the Mediterranean, yielded a refined and courtly fashion of lyrical verse, which took the form of love-songs, battle-songs, and satires, and which is now known as Provençal litera-

[1] See *Age of the Despots*, p. 59.

ture. The influence of feudal culture, communicated through these two distinct but closely connected channels, was soon felt in Italy. The second phase of Italian development has been called Lombard, because it was chiefly in the north of the peninsula that the motive force derived from France was active. Yet if we regard the matter of this new literature, rather than its geographical distribution, we shall more correctly designate it by the title Franco-Italian. In the first or Latin period, the Italians used an ancient language. They now adopted not only the forms but also the speech of the people from whom they received their literary impulse. It is probable that the Lombard dialects were still too rough to be accommodated to the new French style. The cultivated classes were familiar with Latin, and had felt no need of raising the vernacular above the bare necessities of intercourse. But the superior social development of the French courts and castles must be reckoned the main reason why their language was acclimatised in Italy together with their literature. Just as the Germans before the age of Herder adopted polite culture, together with the French tongue, ready-made from France, so now the Lombard nobles, bordering by the Riviera upon Provence, borrowed poetry, together with its diction, from the valley of the Rhone. Passing along the Genoese coast, crossing the Cottian Alps, and following the valley of the Po, the languages of France and Provence diffused themselves throughout the North of Italy. With the *langue d'oïl* came the Chansons de Geste of the Carolingian Cycle and the romances of the Arthurian legend. With the *langue d'oc* came

the various forms of troubadour lyric. Without displacing the local dialects, these imported languages were used and spoken purely by the nobles; while a hybrid, known as *franco-italian*, sprang up for the common people, who listened to the tales of Roland and Rinaldo on the market-place. The district in which the whole mass of this foreign literature seems to have flourished most at first, was the Trevisan March, stretching from the Adige, along the Po, beyond the Brenta and past Venice, to the base of the Friulian Alps. The Marches of Treviso were long known as *La Marca Amorosa* or *Gioiosa*, epithets which strongly recall the Provençal phrases of *Joie* and *Gai Saber*, and which are familiar to English readers of Sir Thomas Mallory in the name of Lancelot's castle, *Joyous Gard*. Exactly to define the period of Trevisan culture would be difficult. It is probable that it began to flourish about the end of the twelfth, and declined in the middle of the thirteenth century. Dante alludes to it in a famous passage of the *Purgatory*[1]:

> In sul paese ch' Adige e Po riga,
> Solea valore e cortesia trovarsi
> Prima che Federigo avesse briga.

There are many traces of advanced French civilisation in this district, among which may be mentioned the exhibition of Miracle Plays upon the French type at Civitale in the years 1298 and 1304, and the *Castello d' Amore* at Treviso described by Rolandini in the year 1214. Yet, though the Trevisan Marches were the nucleus of this Gallicising

[1] xvi. 115.

fashion, the use of French and Provençal spread widely through the North and down into the centre of Italy. Numerous manuscripts in the *langue d'oïl* attest the popularity of the Arthurian romances throughout Lombardy, and we know that in Umbria S. Francis first composed poetry in French.[1] It was in French, again, that Brunetto Latini wrote his *Tesoro*. So late as the middle of the fourteenth century this habit had not died out. Dante in the *Convito* thought it necessary to stigmatise 'those men of perverse mind in Italy who commend the vulgar tongue of foreigners and depreciate their own.'

We have seen that the language and the matter of this imported literature were twofold; and we can distinguish two distinct currents, after its reception into Italy. The Provençal lyric, as was natural, attracted the attention of the nobles; and since feudalism had a stronger hold upon the valley of the Po than on any other district, Lombardy became the chief home of this poetry. Not to mention the numerous Provençal singers who sought fortune and adventure in northern Italy, about twenty-five Italians, using the *langue d'oc*, may be numbered between the Marchese Alberto Malaspina, who held Lunigiana about 1204, and the Maestro Ferrara, who lived at the Court of Azzo VII. of Este.[2] These were for the most part courtiers and imperial feudatories; and only two were Tuscans. The person of one of them, Sordello, is familiar to every reader of the *Purgatory*.

[1] See D'Ancona, *Poesia Popolare*, p. 11, note.

[2] See Carducci, *Dello Svolgimento della Letteratura Nazionale*, p. 29.

The second tide of influence passed from Northern France together with the epics of chivalry. But its operation was not so simple as that of the Provençal lyric. We can trace for instance a marked difference between the effect produced by the *Chansons de Geste* and that of the Arthurian tales. The latter seem to have been appropriated by the nobles, while the former found acceptance with the people. Nor was this unnatural. At the opening of the twelfth century the Carolingian Cycle had begun to lose its vogue among the polished aristocracy of France. That uncompromising history of warfare hardly suited a society which had developed the courtesy and the romance of chivalry. It represented the manners of an antecedent age of feudalism. Therefore the tales of the Round Table arose to satisfy the needs of knights and ladies, whose thoughts were turned to love, the chase, the tournament, and errantry. The Arthurian myth idealised their newer and more refined type of feudal civility. It was upon the material of this romantic Epic that the nobles of North Italy fastened with the greatest eagerness. No one has forgotten how the tragedy of Lancelot and Guinevere proved, in a later day, the ruin of Francesca and her lover.[1] The people, on the other hand, took livelier interest in the songs of Roland and Charlemagne. The Chansons de Geste formed the stock in trade of those *Cantatores Francigenarum*, who crowded the streets and squares of Lombard cities.[2] The exchange of courtesies and refined senti-

[1] Romagnoli has reprinted some specimens of the *Illustre et Famosa Historia di Lancillotto del Lago*, Bologna, 1862.

[2] Muratori in *Antiq. Ital. Diss.* xxx. p. 351, quotes a decree of the Bolognese Commune, dated 1288, to the effect that *Cantatores Francige-*

ments between a Tristram and Iseult or a Lancelot and Guinevere must naturally have been less attractive to a rude populace than narratives of battle with the Infidel, and Roland's horn, and Gano's treason, and Rinaldo's quarrels with his liege. In the Arthurian Cycle names and places alike—Avalon, Camelot, Winchester, Gawain, Galahaut—were distant and ill-adapted to Italian ears.[1] The whole tissue of the romance, moreover, was imaginative. The Carolingian Cycle, on the contrary, introduced personages with a good right to be considered historical, and dwelt upon familiar names and traditional ideas. We are not, therefore, surprised to find that this Epic took a strong hold on the popular imagination, and so penetrated the Italian race as to assume a new form on Italian soil, while the Arthurian romance survived as a pastime of the upper classes, and underwent no important metamorphosis at their hands. In the course of this volume, I shall have to show how, when Italian literature emerged again from the people after nearly a century of neglect, it was the transformed tale of Charlemagne and Roland which supplied the Italian nation with its master-works of epic poetry—the *Morgante* and the two *Orlandos*.

The Lombard, or rather the Franco-Italian period

narum in plateis Communis omnino morari non possint. They had become a public nuisance and impeded traffic.

[1] In the *Cento Novelle* there are several Arthurian stories. The rubrics of one or two will suffice to show how the names were Italianised. *Qui conta come la damigella di Scalot morì per amore di Lanciallotto de Lac.* Nov. lxxxii. *Qui conta della reina Isotta e di m. Tristano di Leonis.* Nov. lxv. In the *Historia di Lancillotto*, cited above, Sir Kay becomes *Keux*; Gawain is *Gauuan.* In the *Tavola Ritonda*, *Morderette* stands for Mordred, *Bando di Benoiche* for Ban of Benwick, *Lotto d'Organia* for Lot of Orkeney.

is marked by the adoption of a foreign language and foreign fashions. Literature at this stage was exotic and artificial; but the legacy transmitted to the future was of vast importance. On the one side, the courtly rhymers who versified in the Provençal dialect, bequeathed to Sicily and Tuscany the chivalrous lyric of love, which was destined to take its final and fairest form from Dante and Petrarch. On the other hand, the populace who listened to the Song of Roland on the market-place, prepared the necessary conditions for a specific and eminently characteristic product of Italian genius. Without a national epic, the Italians were forced to borrow from the French. But what they borrowed, they transmuted—not merely adding new material, like the tale of Gano's treason and the fiction of Orlando's birth at Sutri, but importing their own spirit, positive, ironical and incredulous, into the substance of the legend.

In the course of Italianising the tale of Roland, the native dialects made their first effort to assume a literary form. We possess sufficient MS. evidence to prove that the Franco-Italian language of the songs recited to the Lombard townsfolk, was composed by the adaptation of local modes of speech to French originals. The process was not one of pure translation. The dialects were not fit for such performance. It may rather be described as the attempt of the dialects to acquire capacity for studied expression. With French poems before them, the popular rhapsodes introduced dialectical phrases, substituted words, and, where this was possible, modified the style in favour of the dialect they wished to use. French still pre-

dominated. But the hybrid was of such a nature that a transition from this mixed jargon to the dialect, presented in a literary shape, was imminent.

There is sufficient ground for presuming that the Italian dialects triumphed simultaneously in all parts of the peninsula about the middle of the thirteenth century.[1] This presumption is founded partly on the quotations from dialectical poetry furnished by Dante in the *De Eloquio*, which prove a wide-spread literary activity; partly on fragments recovered from sources which can be referred to the second half of the century. The peculiar problems offered by the conditions of poetry at Frederick II.'s Court, though these are open to many contradictory solutions, render the presumption more than probable. It is difficult to understand the third or Sicilian period of literature without hypothesising an antecedent stage of vulgar poetry produced in local dialects. But, owing to the scarcity of documents, no positive facts regarding the date and mode of their emergence can be adduced. We have on this point to deal with matters of delicate conjecture and minute inference; and though it might seem logical to introduce at once a discussion on the growth of the Italian language, and its relation to the dialects which were undoubtedly spoken before they were committed to writing, special reasons induce me to defer this topic for the present.

While the North of Italy was deriving the literature both of its cultivated classes and of the people from France, a new and still more important phase of evolu-

[1] See Adolfo Bartoli, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, vol ii. chapters iii., iv., v., vi., for a minute enquiry into this early dialectical literature.

tion was preparing in the South. Both Dante and Petrarch recognise the Sicilian poets as the first to cultivate the vulgar tongue with any measure of success, and to raise it to the dignity of a literary language. In this opinion they not only uttered the tradition of their age, but were also without doubt historically correct. Whatever view may be adopted concerning the formation of the *lingua illustre*, or polished Italian, from the dialectical elements already employed in local kinds of poetry, there is no disputing the importance of the Sicilian epoch. We cannot fix precise dates for its duration. Yet, roughly speaking, it may be said to have begun in 1166, when troubadours of some distinction gathered round the person of the Norman king, William II., at Palermo, and to have ended in 1266, when Manfred was killed at the battle of Benevento. It culminated during the reign of the Emperor Frederick II. (1210—1250), who was himself skilled in Latin and the vulgar tongues of France and Italy, and who drew to his Court men distinguished for their abilities in science and literature. Dante called Frederick, *Cherico grande*. The author of the *Cento Novelle* described him as *veramente specchio del mondo in parlare et in costumi*, and spoke of his capital as the resort of *la gente ch' avea bontade . . . sonatori, trovatori, e belli favellatori, uomini d' arti, giostratori, schermitori, d' ogni maniera gente*.[1] The portrait drawn of him by Salimbene in his contemporary chronicle, though highly unfavourable to the schismatic enemy of Holy Church, proves that his

[1] *Cento Novelle*, Milano, 1825, Nov. ii. and xxi.

repute was great in Italy as a patron of letters and himself a poet of no mean pretensions.[1]

It is impossible in these pages to enquire into the views of this great ruler for the resuscitation of culture in Italy, which, had he not been thwarted in his policy by the Church, might have anticipated the Renaissance by two centuries. Yet the opinion may be hazarded that the cultivation of Italian as a literary language was due in no small measure to the forethought and deliberate intention of an Emperor, who preferred his southern to his northern provinces. Unlike the Lombard nobles, Frederick, while adopting Provençal literature, gave it Italian utterance. This seems to indicate both purpose and prevision on his part. Wishing to found an Italian dynasty, and to acclimatise the civilisation of Provence in his southern capitals, he was careful to promote purely Italian studies. There can at any rate be no doubt that during his reign and under his influence very considerable progress was made towards fixing the diction and the forms of poetry. He found dialects, not merely spoken, but already adapted to poetical expression, in more than one district of Italy. From these districts the most eminent artists flocked to his Court. It was there that a common type of speech was formed, which, when the burghers of Central Italy began to emulate the versifiers of Palermo, furnished them with an established style.

How the *lingua aulica* came into being admits of much debate. But we may, I think, maintain that the fundamental dialect from which it sprang was Sicilian,

[1] *Chronica Fr. Salimbene Parmensis, ord. min.*, Parmæ, 1857, p. 166.

purified by comparison with Provençal and Latin, and largely modified by Apulian elements. The difficulty of understanding the problem is in part removed when we remember the variety of representatives from noble towns of Italy who met in Frederick's circle, the tendencies of a dialect to refine itself when it assumes a literary form, and the continuous influences of Court-life in common. Italians gathered round the person of the sovereign at Palermo from their native cities, must in ordinary courtesy have abandoned the crudities of their respective idioms. This sacrifice could not but have been reciprocal; and since Provençal was not spoken to the exclusion of the mother-tongue, a generic Italian had here the best chance of development. That this generic or Court Italian was at root Sicilian, we have substantial reasons to believe; but that it exactly resembled the Sicilian of to-day, which does not greatly differ from extant documents of thirteenth and fourteenth century Sicilian dialect, seems too crude a supposition.[1] Unfortunately, our evidence upon this point is singularly scanty. Few poems of the Sicilian period, as will appear in the sequel, have descended to us in their primitive form.

Not only was a common language instituted in the Court of Frederick; but the metrical forms of subsequent Italian poetry were either fixed or suggested by the practice of these early versifiers. Few subjects

[1] See the *Cronache Siciliane*, Bologna, Romagnoli, 1865, the first of which bears upon its opening paragraph the date 1358. Sicilian, it may be said in passing, presents close dialectical resemblance to Tuscan. Even the superficial alteration of the Sicilian *u* and *i* into the Tuscan *o* and *e* (*e.g. secundu* and *putiri* into *secondo* and *potere*) effaces the most obvious differences.

are involved in darker obscurity than the history of metres—the creation of rhythmical structures whereby one national literature distinguishes itself from another.[1] Just as each writer who can claim an individual style seems to possess his own rhythm, his peculiar tune, to which his sentences are cadenced, so each nation appropriates and adheres to its own metre. The Italian hendecasyllabic, the French Alexandrian, the English heroic iambic, are obvious examples. This selection of a characteristic metre, and the essays through which the race arrives at its perfection, seem to imply some instinct, planted within the deeps of national personality, whereof the laws have not been formulated. When we speak of the genius of a language, we do but personify this instinct, which appears to exercise itself at an early period of national development, leaving for subsequent centuries the task of refining and completing what had been projected at the outset. Therefore, nothing very distinct can be asserted about the origin of the hendecasyllable iambic line, which marks Italian poetry.[2] Yet it certainly appears among

[1] The Italians wavered long between several metrical systems, before they finally adopted the hendecasyllabic line, which became the consecrated rhythm of serious poetry. Carducci, in his treatise *Intorno ad alcune Rime* (Imola, Galeati, 1876), pp. 81–89, may be profitably consulted with regard to early Italian Alexandrines. He points out that Ciullo's *Tenzone* :

Rosa fresc' aulentissima—c' appar' in ver' l' estate :

and the Ballata of the Comari :

Pur bi' del vin, comadr'—e no lo temperare :

together with numerous compositions of the Northern Lombard school (Milan and Verona), are written in Alexandrines. In the Lombardo-Sicilian age of Italian literature, before Bologna acted as an intermediate to Florence, this metre bid fair to become acclimatised. But the Tuscan genius determined decisively for the hendecasyllabic.

[2] See the Appendix to this chapter on Italian hendecasyllables.

the early specimens of the Sicilian period. The rhyming system of the octave stanza may possibly be traced in Ciullo d'Alcamo's *tenzone* between the lover and his mistress; though it still needed a century of elaboration at the hands of popular *rispetti*-writers, to present it in completed form to Boccaccio's muse.[1] This poem is Alexandrine in rhythm. *Terza rima* seems to be suggested by the sonnet of the *Sparviere*; while a perfect sonnet, differing very little either in structure or in diction from the type of Petrarch's, is supplied in Piero delle Vigne's *Perocchè amore*. At the same time the highwrought structure of the *Canzone*, destined to play so triumphant a part during the whole period of the *trecento*, receives its essential outlines from the rhymers of this age, especially from Jacopo da Lentino and Guido delle Colonne.

Though the forms and language of Sicilian poetry decided the destinies of Italian, the substance of this literature was far from being national. Under its Italian garb, it was no less an exotic than the Provençal and French compositions of the Lombard period. After running a brilliant course in Provence, the poetry of chivalrous love was now declining to its decadence. It had ceased to be the spontaneous expression of a dominant ideal, and had degenerated into a pastime for *dilettanti*. Its style had become conventional; its phrases fixed. The visionary science upon which it was based, had to be studied in codes of doctrine and repeated with pedantic precision. Frederick

[1] See Carducci, *Cantilene*, etc. (Pisa, 1871), pp. 58–60, for thirteenth-century *rispetti* illustrating the Sicilian form of the Octave Stanza and its transformation to the Tuscan type.

and his courtiers received it at the point of its extinction. They adhered as closely as possible to traditional forms, imitated time-honoured models, and confined their efforts to the reproduction of the old art in a new vehicle of language. Therefore, vernacular Italian poetry in this first stage of its existence presents the curious spectacle of literature decrepit in the cradle, hampered with the euphuism of an exhausted manner before it could move freely, and taught to frame conceits and cold antitheses before it learned to lisp.

Such, in general, may be said to have been the character of the Sicilian or Italo-Provençal style. Yet a careful student of these Canzoni, Serventesi, and Tenzoni, will discover much that is both natural and graceful, much that is elevated in thought, much again that belongs to the crude sensuousness of Southern temperament. There is an unmistakeable blending of the Provençal tradition with indigenous realism, especially in such compositions as the Lament of Odo delle Colonne, the Lament of Ruggieri Pugliese, and the *Tenzone* of Ciullo d'Alcamo.[1] We can trace a double current of inspiration: the one passing downward from the learned writers of the Court, the judges, notaries, and men of state, who followed Provençal tradition; the other upward from the people, who rhymed as nature taught them: both mingling in the compositions of those more genial poets, who were able to

[1] The poetry of this period will be found in Trucchi, *Poesie Inedite*, Prato, 1846; *Poeti del Primo Secolo*, Firenze, 1816; *Raccolta di Rime Antiche Toscane*, Palermo, Assenzio, 1817; and in a critical edition of the *Codex Vaticanus* 3793, *Le Antiche Rime Volgari*, per cura di A. d' Ancona e D. Comparetti, Bologna, Romagnoli, 1875.

infuse reality into the laboured form of their adoption. What might have been the destiny of Italian literature, if the Suabian House had maintained its hold on the Two Sicilies, and this process of fusion had been completed at Naples or Palermo, cannot even be surmised. Our knowledge of the earliest Italo-Provençal poetry is vague, owing to lack of genuine Sicilian monuments. We can only trace faint indications of a progress toward greater freedom and more spontaneous inspiration, as the 'courtly makers' yielded to the singers of the people. The battle of Benevento extinguished at one blow both the hopes of the Suabian dynasty and the development of Sicilian poetry. When Manfred's body had been borne naked on a donkey from the battle-field to his nameless grave, amid the cries of *Chi compra Manfredi?* a foreign troubadour, Amerigo di Peguilhan, composed his lament, bidding the *serventese* pass through all lands and over every sea to find the man who knew where Arthur dwelt and when he would return. Arthur was dead, and would never come again. Chivalry and feudalism had held their brief and feeble sway in Italy, and that was over. Neither in Lombardy among the castles, nor in Sicily within the Court, throbbed the real life of the Italian nation. That life was in the Communes. It beat in the heart of the people—especially of that people who had made nobility a crime beside the Arno, and had outlawed the *Scioperati* from their City of the Flower. What the Suabian princes gave to Italy was the beginning of a common language. It remained for Tuscany to stamp that language with her image and superscription, to

fix it in its integrity for all future ages, and to render it the vehicle of stateliest science and consummate art.

The question of the origin of the Italian language pertains rather to philology than to the history of culture.[1] Yet I cannot pass it wholly by in silence, since it was raised at an early period by the founders of Italian literature, who occupied themselves with singular sagacity concerning the relations of the literary to the dialectical forms of speech. Dante's *De Eloquio*, though based on unscientific principles of analysis, opened a discussion which exercised the acutest intellects of the sixteenth century.

During the whole Roman period, it is certain that literary Latin differed in important respects from the vulgar, rustic or domestic, language. Thus while a Roman gentleman would have said *habeo pulchrum equum*, his groom probably expressed the same thought in words like these: *ego habeo unum bellum caballum*. Between a *graffito* scribbled on the wall of some old Roman building—*Alexander unum animal est*, for instance—and one now chalked in the same district, *Alessandro è un animale*, there is hardly as much difference as between a literary Latin sentence and either of these rustic epigrams; while the use of such intensitives as *multum* and *bene*, to express the superlative degree, indicate in vulgar Latin the pre-

[1] The most important modern works upon this subject are three Essays by Napoleone Caix, *Saggio sulla Storia della Lingua e dei Dialetti d' Italia*, Parma, 1872; *Studi di Etimologia Italiana e Romanza*, Firenze, 1878; *Le Origini della Lingua Poetica Italiana*, Firenze, 1880. D'Ovidio's Essay on the *De Eloquio* in his *Saggi Critici*, Napoli, 1878, may also be consulted with advantage.

sence of a principle alien to literary Latin but sympathetic to modern speech. The vulgar or rustic Latin continued, side by side with its literary counterpart, throughout the middle ages, forming in the first centuries of imperial decline the common speech of the Romance peoples, and gradually assuming those specific forms which determined the French, Spanish, and Italian types. There is little doubt that, could we possess ourselves of sufficient documents, we should be able to trace the stages in this process. Both literary and vulgar Latin suffered transformation—the former declining in purity, variety, and vigour; the latter diverging dialectically into the constituents of the three grand families of modern Latin. But the metamorphosis was not of the same nature in both cases. While the literary language had been fixed, arrested, and delivered over to death, the vulgar tongue retained a vivid and assimilative life, capable of biological transmutation. French, Spanish, and Italian are modes of its existence continued under laws of organic variety and change.

It would be unscientific to suppose that rustic Latin, even in the most flourishing period of the Roman Empire, was identical in all provinces. From the first it must have held within itself the principles of differentiation. And when we consider the varying conditions of soil, climate, ethnological admixture and political development in the several regions of the Roman world, together with the divers influences of contiguous or invasive races, we shall form some notion of the process by which the three languages in

question branched off from the common stock of rustic Latin.

The same laws of differentiation hold good with regard to the dialects in each of these new languages. It is improbable that absolutely the same vulgar Latin was at any epoch spoken in two remote districts of the same province—on the Tuscan sea-coast, for example, and on the banks of Padus. Even when the Roman empire used one language, intelligible from the Ægean to the German Ocean, the Italic districts must have differed in their local vernacular. Again, the same conditions (climatic, ethnological, political, and so forth) which helped to determine the generic distinctions of French, Spanish, and Italian, determined also the specific distinctions of one Italian dialect from another. Those of the north-west, for instance, inclined to Gallic, and those of the north-east to Illyrian idiom. Those of Lombardy in general exhibit a mixture of German words. Those of Sicily and the south approximate more to a Spanish type, and share the effects of Greek and Arab occupation. The dialects of the centre, especially the Tuscan, show marked superiority both in grammatical form and phonetic purity over the more disintegrated and corrupted idioms of north and south. It might be suggested that Tuscan, being less modified by foreign contact, continued the natural life of the old rustic Latin according to laws of unimpeded self-development. But, however we may attempt to explain this problem, the fact remains that, while the Italian dialects present affinities which show them to be of one lin-

guistic family, it is Tuscan that completes and interprets them collectively. Tuscan stands to Italian in the same relation as Castilian to Spanish, or the speech of the Ile de France to French. It is a dialect, but a dialect that realised the bent and striving of the language. We find it difficult to feel, far more to state, what qualities in a dialect and in the people of the district who use it, render one idiom more adapted to literary usage, more characteristic of the language it helps to constitute, more plastic and expressive of national peculiarities, than those around it. But the fact is certain that this superiority in Tuscan was early recognised[1]; and that too without any political advantages in favour of its triumph. Boniface VIII. unconsciously expressed, perhaps, the truth, when he called the Florentines *il quinto elemento.* It was something spiritually quintessential, something complementary to the sister dialects, which caused the success of Tuscan.

Thus, while literary Latin, though dying and almost dead, was still taught in the grammar schools and used by learned men, the rustic Latin in the thirteenth century had disappeared. But this disappearance was not death. It was transformation. The group of dialects which represented the new phase in its existence, shared such common qualities as proved them to have had original affinity, and fitted them for being recognised as a single family. The position,

[1] 'Lingua Tusca magis apta est ad literam sive literaturam quam aliæ linguæ, et ideo magis est communis et intelligibilis.' Antonio da Tempo, born about 1275, says this in his Treatise on Italian Poetry, recently printed by Giusto Grion, Bologna, Romagnoli, 1869. See p. 174 of that work.

therefore, of the Italians at the close of the thirteenth century with regard to language, was this. They possessed the classic Latin authors in a bad state of preservation, and studied a few of them with some minuteness, basing their own learned style upon the imitation of Virgil and Ovid, Cicero, Boethius, and the rhetoricians of the lower empire. But at home, in their families, upon the market-place, and in the prosecution of business, they talked the local dialects, each of which was more or less remotely representative of the ancient vulgar Latin. However these dialects might differ, they formed in combination a new language, distinct from the parent stock of rustic Latin, and equally distinct from French and Spanish.[1] Whatever difficulty an Italian of Calabria or Friuli might have felt in understanding the *Divine Comedy*, he would have recognised an element in its diction which defined it from French or Spanish, and marked it out as proper to his mother-tongue. If this was true of the refined type of Tuscan used by a great master, it was no less true of dialectical compositions selected for the express purpose of exhibiting their rudeness. Dante clearly expected contemporary readers not only to interpret, but to appreciate the shades of greater and lesser nicety in the examples he culled from Roman, Apulian, Florentine and other vernacular literatures. This expectation proves that he felt himself to be dealing with a group of dialects which, taken collectively, formed a common idiom.

[1] This fact was recognised by Dante. He speaks of the languages of Si, Oil, and Oc, meaning Italian, French, and Spanish. *De Eloquio*, lib. i. cap. 8. Dante points out their differences, but does not neglect their community of origin.

In these circumstances it was the problem of writers, at the close of the thirteenth century, to construct the ideal vulgar tongue, to discover its capacities for noble utterance, to refine it for artistic usage by the omission of cruder elements existing in each dialect, and to select from those store-houses of living speech the phrases which appeared well suited to graceful utterance. The desideratum, to use Dante's words, was 'that illustrious, cardinal, courtly, curial mother-tongue, proper to each Italian State, special to none, whereby the local idioms of every city are to be measured, weighed, and compared.'[1] Dante saw that this selection of a literary language from the fresh shoots sent up by the antique vulgar Latin stock could best be accomplished in a capital or Court, the meeting-place of learned people and polished intelligences. But such a metropolis of culture, corresponding to Elizabeth's London or the Paris of Louis XIV., was ever wanting in Italy. 'We have no Court,' he says: 'and yet the members that should compose a Court are not absent.'[2] He refers to men of education and good manners, upon whom, in the absence of a local centre of refinement, fell the duty of reforming the vernacular. The peculiar conditions of Italy, as he described them, were destined to subsist throughout the next two centuries and a half, when men of learning, taking Tuscan as their standard, sought by practice and example to form a national language. The self-consciousness of the Italians front to front with this problem, as revealed to us in the pages of the *De Eloquio*, and the decision with which

[1] *De Vulg. Eloq.* i. 16.

[2] *Ibid.* i. 18.

the great authors of the fourteenth century fixed a certain type of diction, accurately spoken nowhere, though nearer to the Tuscan than to any other idiom, may be reckoned among the most interesting phenomena in the history of literature. Tuscan predominated; but that the masterpieces of the *trecento* were not composed in any one of the unadulterated Tuscan dialects is clear, not merely from the contemporary testimony of Dante himself, but also from the obstinate discussions raised upon this subject by Bembo at a later period. A guiding and controlling principle of taste determined the instinctive method of selection whereby Tuscan was adapted to the common needs of Italy.

While treating of the Latin, the Lombard or Franco-Italian, and the Sicilian or Italo-Provençal periods of national developement, I have hitherto neglected that plebeian literature which, although its monuments have almost perished, must have been diffused in dialects through Italy after the opening of the thirteenth century. Written for and by the people, the relics of this prose and poetry are valuable, not merely for the light they throw on the formation of language, but also for their indications of national tendencies. In the northern dialects we meet with treatises of religious, ethical and gnomic import, among which the *Gerusalemme Celeste* and *Babilonia Infernale* of Fra Giacomino of Verona, the Bible History of Pietro Bescapè of Milan, the Contention between Satan and the Virgin of Bonvesin da Riva, and two other dialogues by the same author, one between the Soul and Body, the other between a son and his father in

hell, deserve mention. To this class again belongs Bonvesin's *Cinquanta Cortesie da Tavola*, a book of etiquette adapted to the needs of the small *bourgeoisie* upon their entrance into social life.

It is impossible to fix even an approximate date for the emergence of Italian prose. Law documents, deeds of settlement, contracts, and public acts, which can be referred with certainty to the first half of the thirteenth century, display a pressure of the vulgar speech upon the formal Latin of official verbiage. The effort to obtain precision, in designating some particular locality or some important person, forces the scribe back upon his common speech; and these evidences of difficulty in wielding the Latin which had now become a dying language, prove that, long before it was written, Italian was spoken. From the year 1231 we possess accounts of domestic expenditure written by one Mattasalà di Spinello dei Lambertini in the Sienese dialect. Then follow Lucchese documents and letters of Sienese citizens, which, though they have no literary value, show that people who could write had begun to express their thoughts in spoken idiom. The first essays in Italian composition for a lettered public were translations from works already written by Italians in *langue d'oïl*. Among these a prominent place must be assigned to the version of Marco Polo's travels, which Rusticiano of Pisa first published in French, having possibly received them in Venetian from the traveller's own lips. The *Tesoro* of Brunetto Latini and Egidio's *De Regimine Principum* were Italianised in this way; while numerous digests of Frankish romances, including the collection known as *Conti di antichi Cavalieri*, appeared

to meet the same popular demand. Religious history and ethics furnished another library in the vernacular. The *Dodici Conti Morali*, the *Introduzione alle Virtù*, the *Giardino della Consolazione*, and the *Libro di Cato* supplied the people with specimens from works already famous. After a like manner, books of rhetoric and grammar in vogue among the medieval students were popularised in abstracts for Italian readers. We may cite a version of Orosius, and a *Fiore di Retorica* based upon the *Ad Herennium* and Cicero. Of scientific compilations, the *Composizione del Mondo* by Ristoro of Arezzo, embracing astronomical and geographical information, takes rank with the ethical and rhetorical works already mentioned. The note of all these compositions is that they are professedly epitomes of learning, already possessed in more authentic sources by scholars. As such, they prove that there existed a class of readers eager for instruction, to whom books written in Latin or in French were not accessible. In a word, they indicate the advent of the modern tongue, with all its exigencies and with all its capabilities. To deal with the Chronicles of this period is no easy matter; for those which are professedly the oldest—Matteo Spinelli's, Ricordano Malespini's, and *Lu Ribellamentu di Sicilia*—have been proved in some sense fabrications. On the other hand, it is clear from the *Cento Novelle* that the more dramatic episodes of history and myth were being submitted to the same epitomising treatment. Finally we have to mention Guittone of Arezzo's epistles as the first serious attempt to treat the vulgar tongue rhetorically, for a distinct literary purpose.

From the dry records of incipient prose it is refreshing to turn to another species of popular poetry; for poetry in the period of origins is always more adult than prose. Numerous fragments of political songs have been disinterred from chronicles, which can be referred to the thirteenth century. Thus an anonymous Genoese rhymester celebrated the victories of Laiazzo (1294) and Curzola (1298), while Giovanni Villani preserved six lines upon the siege of Messina (1282).[1] Verses in the vulgar tongue commemorating the apostacy of Fra Elia, General of the Franciscans, in 1240, and the coming of the Florentine Lambertesco dei Lamberteschi as Podestà to Reggio in 1243, with scraps of song relating to Pisan and Florentine history, may be read in Carducci's monumental work upon this period of literature.[2] These relics, though precious, are singularly scanty; nor can a Northern student pass them by without remarking the absence of that semi-historical, semi-mythical poetry, which is so familiar to us under the name of Ballad. More important, because of greater extent, are the laments and amorous or comic poems, which can be attributed to the same century. The Lament of the Paduan woman for her husband, who has journeyed to Holy Land in the Crusade preached by Urban IV., may be compared with Rinaldo d' Aquino's Farewell.[3] Both of these compositions were written under Provençal influence, though the former at least is strictly dialectical and popular. Passing to satirical poems, I may mention

[1] See *Archivio Glottologico Italiano*, vol. ii. Villani, lib. vii. cap. 68.

[2] *Cantilene e Ballate, Strambotti e Madrigali nei Secoli xiii. e xiv.* A cura di Giosuè Carducci (Pisa, 1871), pp. 29–32.

[3] *Ibid.* pp. 18, 22.

two pieces extracted from a Bolognese MS. of 1272,[a] which paint with vivid force of humour the manners of women.[1] One represents a drinking-party of more than Aristophanic freedom; the other, a wrangling match between two sisters-in-law—the *Cognate*. Each displays facility of composition and a literary style already formed. They are not without French parallels; but the mode of presentation is Italian, and the phrases have been transplanted without change from vulgar dialogue. Two romantic lyrics extracted from the same MS. prove that the fashionable style of Provence had descended from the nobles to the common folk and taken a new tincture of realism.[2] The complaint of an unwedded maiden to her mother is a not uncommon motive in this early literature, turning either to pathos or suggesting a covert coarseness in the climax.[3] To the same class may be referred some graceful lyrics and dance-songs, combining the artlessness of popular inspiration with reminiscences of French originals.[4] Of these the Nightingale and the Song of Love in Dreams might be selected for their close sympathy with the *rispetti* made in Italian country districts at the present day. Lastly, I have to mention two obscene poems of great popularity, *Il Nicchio* and *L' Ugellino*.[5] These were known to Boccaccio, for he refers to them by name at the close of the fifth day in the Decameron... Each of the ditties bears a thoroughly Italian stamp, and anticipates by its peculiar style of *double entendre* a whole department of national poetry—the Florentine Carnival

[1] *Ibid.* pp. 39, 42. [a] *Ibid.* pp. 43, 45.
[3] See *ibid.* p. 45, the stanza which begins, *Matre tant à.*
[4] *Ibid.* pp. 47–60. [5] *Ibid.* pp. 62–66.

Songs and the Capitoli of the Roman academies being distinctly foreshadowed in their humorous and allusive treatment of a vulgar topic. Hence we may take occasion to observe that those who accuse Lorenzo de' Medici and his contemporaries of debasing popular taste by the deliberate introduction of licentiousness into art, exceed the limits of just censure. What is called the Paganism of the Renaissance, was indigenous in Italy. We find it inherent in vulgar literature before the date of Boccaccio; and if, with the advance of social luxury, it assumed, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a more objectionable prominence, this should not be exclusively ascribed to the influence of humanistic studies or to the example of far-sighted despots. Indeed, it can be asserted that the specific quality of the popular Italian genius—its sensuous realism, qualified with irony—emerges unmistakeably in five most important relics of the thirteenth century, the *Cognate*, the *Comadri*, the Tenzone of the Maiden and her Mother (*Mamma lo temp' è venuto*), the *Nicchio*, and the *Ugellino*.[1] They yield the common stuff of that magnificent art which shall afterwards be developed into the *Decameron* and the *Novelle*, out of which shall proceed the comedies and Bernesque lyrics of the *Cinque Cento*, and which is destined to penetrate the golden cantos of the

[1] The practical and realistic common sense of the Italians, rejecting chivalrous and ecclesiastical idealism as so much nonsense, is illustrated by the occasional poems of two Florentine painters—Giotto's Canzone on *Poverty*, and Orcagna's Sonnet on *Love*. Orcagna, in the latter, criticises the conventional blind and winged Cupid, and winds up with :

L' amore è un trastullo :
Non è composto di legno nè di osso ;
E a molte gente fa rompere il dosso.

Orlando Furioso. To an unprejudiced student of Italian arts and letters nothing seems more clearly proved than the fact that a certain powerful objective quality—call it realism, call it sensuousness—determines their most genuine productions, sinking to grossness, ascending to sublimity, combining with religious feeling in the fine arts, blending with the definiteness of classic style, but never absent. It is this objectivity, realism, sensuousness, which constitutes the strength of the Italians, and assigns the limitations of their faculty.

In quite a different region, but of no less importance for the future of Italian literature, must be reckoned the religious hymns, which, during the thirteenth century, began to be composed in the vernacular. The earliest known specimen is S. Francis' famous *Cantico del Sole*, which, even as it is preserved to us, after undergoing the process of modernisation, retains the purity and freshness of a bird's note in spring. After S. Francis, but at the distance of half a century, followed Jacopone da Todi, with his passionate and dithyrambic odes, which seem to vibrate tongues of fire. To this religious lyric the Flagellant frenzy (1260) and the subsequent formation of Companies of Laudesi gave decisive impulse. I shall have in a future chapter to discuss the relation between the Umbrian Lauds and the origins of the Drama. It is enough here to notice the part played in the evolution of the language by so early a transition from the Latin Hymns of the Church to Hymns written in the modern speech for private confraternities and domestic gatherings.

We learn from this meagre review of ancient popular poetry that during the thirteenth century the dialects of each district had begun to seek literary expression. There are many indications that the products of one province speedily became the property of the rest. Spontaneous motives were mingled with French and Provençal recollections; and already we can trace the unconscious effort to form a common language in the process known as *Toscaneggiamento*, or the translation of local songs into Tuscan idiom.[1] It would, therefore, be incorrect to imagine either that the Sicilian poets were blank imitators of Provençal models, or that the Italian language started into being at Palermo. What really happened was, that Frederick's Court became the centre of a widespread literary movement. The Sicilian dialect predominating at Palermo over the rest, the poets of different provinces who assembled round the Emperor were subsequently known as Sicilian. Their songs, passing upward through the peninsula, bore that name, even when they had, as at Florence, been converted, by dialectical modifications, to the use of Tuscan folk.[2] The aristocratic tone of the Court made Provençal literature fashionable; and a refined diction, softening the crudities of more than one competing dialect, was formed to express the subtleties of the Provençal style. We must bear in mind that the poets of this Court

[1] See Carducci, *op. cit.* pp. 52-60, for early examples of Tuscanised Sicilian poems of the people.

[2] The Tuscanised Sicilian poems in Carducci's collection referred to above, are extracted from a Florentine MS. called *Napolitana*, and a Tenzone between man and woman (*ib.* p. 52), which has clearly undergone a like process, is called *Ciciliana*.

were men of learned education—judges, notaries, officials. Dante makes *dottori* nearly synonymous with *trovatori*. At the same time, one of the earliest specimens of Sicilian poetry, Ciullo d'Alcamo's *Tenzone*, is popular, free from Provençal affectation, inclining to comedy in some of its marked motives and to coarseness at its close. This proves that in the island, side by side with 'courtly makers' and *dottori*, there flourished an original and vulgar manner of poetry.

The process of Tuscanisation referred to in the preceding paragraph is too important in its bearings on the problems of Italian language and literature, to be passed over without further discussion. Nearly all the poetry of the Sicilian epoch has been transmitted to us in Florentine MSS., after undergoing *Toscaneggiamento*. We possess but a few stanzas in a pure condition. There is, therefore, reason to believe that when Dante treated of the courtly Sicilian poets in his essay *De Vulgari Eloquio*, he knew their writings in a form already Tuscanised.[1] In commending the curial and illustrious vernacular, as something distinct from the dialects, he was in truth praising the dialect of his own province, refined by the practice of polite versifiers. At the date of the composition of that essay, the Suabian House had been extinguished; the literary society of the south was broken up; and to Florence had already fallen the heritage of art. What is even more remarkable, the Bolognese poets, who preceded Dante and his peers by one generation, had abandoned

[1] See Francesco d'Ovidio, *Sul Trattato. De Vulgari E'loquentia.* It is reprinted in his volume of *Saggi Critici*, Napoli, 1879. The subject is fully discussed from a point of view at variance with my text by Adolf Gaspary, *Die Sicilianische Dichterschule*, Berlin, 1878.

their own dialect in favour of the purified Tuscan. Consequently the new Italian literature was already Tuscan either by origin, or by adoption, or by a process of transformation, before the Florentines assumed the dictatorship of letters. It seems paradoxical to hint that Dante should not have perceived what has been here stated as more than a mere possibility. How came it that he included Florentine among the peccant idioms, and maintained that the true literary speech was still to seek? These doubts may in part at least be removed, when we remember the peculiar conditions under which the courtly poetry he praised had been produced; and the indirect channels by which it had reached him. In the first place, we have seen that it was composed in avowed imitation of Provençal models, by men of taste and learning drawn from several provinces. They culled, for literary purposes, a vocabulary of colourless and neutral words, which clothed the same conventional ideas with elegant and artificial monotony. When these compositions underwent the further process of Tuscanisation (which was easy, owing to certain dialectical affinities between Sicilian and Tuscan), they lost to a large extent what still remained to them of local character, without acquiring the true stamp of Florentine. Even a contemporary could not have recognised in the verse of Jacopo da Lentino, thus treated, either a genuine Sicilian or a genuine Tuscan flavour. His language presented the appearance of being, as indeed it was, different from both idioms. The artifice of style made it pass for superior; and, in purely literary quality, it was in truth superior to the products of

plebeian inspiration. We may prefer the racy stanzas of the *Cognate* to those frigid and exhausted euphuisms. But the critical taste of so great a master as even Dante was not tuned to any such preference. Though he recognised the defects of the Sicilian poets, as is manifest from his dialogue with Guido in the *Purgatory*, he gave them all credit for elevating verse above the vulgar level. Their insipid diction seemed to him the first germ of a noble *lingua aulica*. Its colourlessness and strangeness hid the fact that it had already, at the close of the thirteenth century, assumed the Tuscan habit, and that from the well-springs of Tuscan idiom the Italian of the future would have to draw its aliment.

The downfall of the Hohenstauffens and the dispersion of their Court-poets proved a circumstance of decisive benefit to Italian literature, by removing it from a false atmosphere into conditions where it freely flourished and expanded its originality. Feudalism formed no vital part of the Italian social system, and chivalry had never been more than an exotic, cultivated in the hotbed of the aristocracy. The impulse given to poetry in the south, under influences in no true sense of the phrase national—a Norman-German dynasty attempting to acclimatise Provençal forms upon Italian soil—could hardly have produced a vigorous type of literature. It is from the people, in centres of popular activity, or where the spirit of the people finds full play in representative society, that characteristic art must be developed. When we say this, we think inevitably of Periclean Athens, Elizabeth's London, the Paris of Louis XIV. If the

chances of our drama had been confined to Court-patronage or Sidney's Areopagus, instead of being extended to the nation by free competition in the wooden theatres where Marlowe and Shakspere appealed to popular taste, there is little doubt but that England would have boasted only of a mediocre and academical stage. When Italian poetry deserted Palermo for the banks of Arno, it exchanged the Court for the people; the subtleties of decadent chivalry for the genuine impulses of a free community; the pettiness of culture for the humanities of a public conscious of high destinies and educated in a masculine political arena. Here the grand qualities of the Italian genius found an open field. Literature, abandoning imitative elegance, expressed the feelings, thoughts, and aspirations of a breed second to none in Europe for acuteness of intellect, intensity of emotion, and greatness of purpose. At Palermo the princes and their courtiers had been reciprocally auditors and poets. At Florence the people listened; and the poets, sprung from them, were speakers. Except at Athens in the golden age of Hellas, no populace has equalled that of Florence, both for the production of original genius, and also for the sensitiveness to beauty, diffused throughout all classes, which brings the artist and his audience into right accord.

Two stages in the transition from Sicily to Florence need to be described. Guittone of Arezzo (1230–1294) strikes the historian of literature as the man who first attempted to nationalise the polished poetry of the Sicilian Court, and to strip the new style of its

feudal pedantry.[1] It was his aim, apparently, dismissing chivalrous conventions, to use the diction and the forms of literary art in an immediate appeal to the Italian people. He wrote, however, roughly. Though he practised vernacular prose, and assumed in verse the declamatory tone which Petrarch afterwards employed with such effect in his addresses to the consciousness of Italy, yet Dante could speak of him with cold contempt[2]; nor can we claim for him a higher place than that of a precursor. He attempted more than he was able to fulfil. But his attempt, when judged by the conditions of his epoch, deserves to rank among achievements.

With a poet of Bologna the case is different. Placed midway between Lombardy and Tuscany, Bologna shared the instincts of the two noblest Italian populations—the Communes who wrested liberty from Frederick Barbarossa, and the Communes who were to give arts and letters to the nation. Bologna, moreover, was proud of her legal university, and had already won her title of 'the learned.' Here Guido Guinicelli solved the problem of rendering the Sicilian style at once national in spirit and elevated in style.[3] He did so by making it scientific. Receiving from his Italo-Provençal predecessors the material of chivalrous love, and obeying the genius of his native city, Guido rhymed of love no longer as a fashionable pastime, but as the medium of philosophic truth. Learning was the mother of the national Italian

[1] *Rime di Fra Guittone d'Arezzo*, Firenze, Morandi, 1828, 2 vols.

[2] *De Vulg. Eloq.* ii. 6; ii. 1; i. 13, and *Purg.* xxvi. 124.

[3] His poems will be found in the collections above mentioned, p. 26 note.

poetry. From Guido started a school of transcendental singers, who used the ancient form and subject-matter of exotic poetry for the utterance of metaphysical thought. The Italians, born, as it were, old, were destined thus to pass from imitation, through speculation, to the final freedom of their sensuous art. Of this new lyric style—logical, allegorical, mystical—the first masterpiece was Guido's Canzone of the Gentle Heart. The code was afterwards formulated in Dante's *Convito*. The life it covered and interpreted was painted in the *Vita Nuova*. Its apocalypse was the *Paradiso*. If Guido Guinicelli did not succeed in writing from the heart, if he was more of an analyst than a lover, it is yet clear that the euphuisms of the Italo-Provençal imitators have yielded in his verse to genuine emotion, while, speaking technically, the complex structure of the true Italian Canzone now appears in all its harmony of grace and grandeur. Guido's language is Tuscan; not the Tuscan of the people, but the Tuscan of the Toscaneggiamenti. Herein, again, we note the importance of this poet in the history of literature. Working outside Florence, but obeying Florentine precedent, he stamps Italian with a Tuscan seal, and helps to conceal from Tuscans themselves the high destinies of their idiom.

Dante puts us at the right point of view for estimating Guido's service. Though he recognised the Sicilians as the first masters of poetic style in Italy, Dante saluted the poet of Bologna as his father[1]:

[1] *Purg.* xxvi.

Quando i' udi' nomar sè stesso il padre
Mio, e degli altri miei miglior, che mai
Rime d' amor usâr dolci e leggiadre.

On the authority of this sentence we hail in Guido the founder of the new and specifically national literature of the Italians. If not the master, he was the prophet of that *dolce stil nuovo*, which freed them from dependence on foreign traditions, and led, by transmutation, to the miracles of their Renaissance art. He divined that sincere source of inspiration, whereof Dante speaks [1]:

Io mi son un che quando
Amore spira, noto; ed a quel modo
Ch' ei detta dentro, vo significando.

The happy instinct which led him to use Tuscan, has secured his place upon the roll of poets who may still be read with pleasure. And of this, too, Dante prophesied [2]:

Li dolci detti vostri,
Che, quanto durerà l' uso moderno,
Faranno cari ancora i loro inchiostri.

Bologna could boast of many minor bards—of the excellent Onesto, of Fabrizio and Ghislieri, *qui doctores fuerunt illustres et vulgarium discretione repleti.*[3] Her erudition was further illustrated by the work of one Guidotto, who composed a treatise on the new vernacular, which he dedicated to King Manfred. Thus both by example and precept, by the testimony of Dante and the fair fame of her own writers, this city makes for us a link between Sicilian and Tuscan literature.

Manfred was slain at Benevento in 1266, and

[1] *Purg.* xxiv. [2] *Purg.* xxvi. [3] *De Vulg. Eloq.* i. 15.

with him expired the prospects of Sicilian poetry. Dante, destined to inaugurate the great age, was born at Florence in 1265. Guido Guinicelli died in 1277, when Dante had completed his twelfth year. From 1249 until 1271, during the whole childhood of Dante, Enzo, King of Sardinia, Manfred's half-brother and Frederick II's. son, remained a prisoner in the public palace of Bologna. In one of those years of preparation and transition, while the learned stanzas of Guido Guinicelli were preluding the 'new sweet style' of Tuscany, this yellow-haired scion of the Suabian princes, the progenitor of the Bentivogli, sent a song forth from his dungeon's *loggie* to greet the provinces of Italy :—

Va, Canzonetta mia,
E saluta Messere,
Dilli lo mal ch' i' aggio.
Quella che m' ha in balia
Si distretto mi tene,
Ch' eo viver non poraggio.
Salutami Toscana,
Quella ched è sovrana,
In cui regna tutta cortesia ;
E vanne in Puglia piana,
La magna Capitana,
Là dove è lo mio core notte e dia.

These lines sound a farewell to the old age and a salutation to the new. Enzo's heart is in the lowlands of Apulia and the great Capitanate, where his father built castles and fought mighty wars. He belongs, like his verses, like his race, like the chivalrous sentiments he had imbibed in youth, to the past; and now he is dreaming life away, a captive with the burghers of Bologna. Yet it is Tuscany for which he reserves the

epithet of Sovereign—Tuscany where all courtesy holds sway. The situation is pathetic. The poem is a prophecy.

Raimond of Tours, one of the earlier French minnesingers, bade his friend seek hospitality 'in the noble city of the Florentines, named Florence; for it is there that joy and song and love are perfected with beauty crowned.'[1] The delicate living and graceful pastimes of Valdarno were famous throughout Europe. In the old French romance of 'Cléomadés,' for example, we read a rhymed description of the games and banquets with which Florence welcomed May and June[2]:—

Pour May et Gayn honorer;
Le May pour sa jolivité,
Et le Gayn pour la planté.

Villani, writing of the year 1283, when the Guelfs had triumphed and the nobles had been quelled, speaks thus of those festivities[3]:—'In this happy and fair state of ease and peaceful quiet so wealth-giving to merchants and artificers, and specially to the Guelfs, who ruled the land, there was formed in the quarter of S. Felicità beyond the Arno, where the family De' Rossi took the lead, together with their neighbourhood, a company or band of one thousand men and upwards, all attired in white, with a Lord named the Lord of Love. This band had no other purpose than to pass the time in games and solace, and in dances of ladies, knights and other people of the city, roaming the town with trumpets and divers instruments of music, in joy

[1] Fauriel, *Dante et les origines*, etc. (Paris, 1854), i. 269.
[2] D'Ancona, *La Poesia Popolare Italiana* (Livorno, 1878), p. 36, note.
[3] Giov. Vill. vii. 89.

and gladness, and abiding together in banquets at mid-day and eventide.' From another chronicle it appears that this company was called the *Brigata bianca* or *Brigata amorosa*.[1] 'There,' says a rhymer who had seen the sports, 'might one behold the rich attire of silk and gold, of samite, white and blue and violet, with fair velvets; and trappings of all colours I beheld that day. The young men mid the women went with gaze fixed upon those eyes angelical, that turn the midnight into noon. Over their blonde tresses the maidens wore gems and precious garlands; lilies, violets and roses were their charming faces. You would not have said: "Yon are mortal beings." They rather seemed a thousand paradises.'[2]

The amusements lasted two months, from May 1 until the end of the midsummer feast of S. John, patron of Florence. Later on, we read of two companies, the one dressed in yellow, the other in white, each led by their King, who filled the city with the sound of music, and wore garlands on their heads, and spent their time in dances and banquets.[3]

Again, when the nobles, after the battle of Campaldino had been finally suppressed, Villani once more returns to the subject of these companies, describing the booths of wood adorned with silken curtains, which were ranged along the streets and squares, for the accommodation of guests.[4] It will be observed that Villani connects the gladness of this season with the successive triumphs of the Guelf party and the suppression of the nobles by the Popolo. Not

[1] Stefani, quoted by D'Ancona, *op. cit.* p. 36. [2] *Ibid.* p. 37, note.
[3] Giov. Vill. x. 216. [4] Giov. Vill. vii. 132.

only was Florence freed from grave anxieties and heavy expenses, caused by the intramural quarrels between Counts and Burghers. But the city felt the advent of her own prosperity, the realisation of her true type, in their victorious close. Then the new noble class, the *popolani grassi*, assumed the gentle manners of chivalry, accommodating its customs to their own rich jovial ideal. Feudalism was extinguished ; but society retained such portions of feudal customs as shed beauty upon common life. Tranquillity succeeded to strife, and the medieval city presented a spectacle similar to that which an old Greek lyrist has described among the gifts of Peace :

To mortal men Peace giveth these good things :
  Wealth, and the flowers of honey-throated song
The flame that springs
On carven altars from fat sheep and kine,
  Slain to the gods in heaven ; and, all day long,
Games for glad youths, and flutes, and wreaths, and circling wine.
Then in the steely shield swart spiders weave
  Their web and dusky woof :
Rust to the pointed spear and sword doth cleave ;
The brazen trump sounds no alarms ;
  Nor is sleep harried from our eyes aloof,
But with sweet rest my bosom warms :
The streets are thronged with beauteous men and young,
And hymns in praise of Love like flames to heaven are flung.

Goro di Stagio Dati, writing at the end of the fourteenth century, has preserved for us an animated picture of Florence in May.[1] 'When the season of spring appears to gladden all the world, every man bethinks him how to make fair the day of S. John, which follows at midsummer, and there is none but provides himself betimes with clothes and ornaments

[1] *Storia di Firenze di Goro Dati* (Firenze, 1735), p. 84.

and jewels. Marriages and other joyous occasions are deferred until that time, to do the festival honour; and two months before the date, they begin to furnish forth the decorations of the races—dresses of varlets, banners, clarions, draperies, and candles, and whatsoever other offerings should be made. The whole city is in a bustle for the preparation of the Festa; and the hearts of young men and women, who take part therein, are set on nought but dancing, playing, singing, banqueting, jousting, and other fair amusements, as though nought else were to be done in those weeks before the coming of S. John's Eve.' The minute account of the ceremonies observed on S. John's Day which follows, need not be transcribed. Yet it may be well to call attention to a *quattrocento* picture in the Florentine Academy, which illustrates the customs of that festival. It is a long panel representing the marriage of an Adimari with a daughter of the Ricasoli. The Baptistery appears in the background; and on the piazza are ladies and young men, clad in damask and rich stuffs, with jewels and fantastic headdresses, joining hands as though in act of dancing. Under the Loggia del Bigallo sit the trumpeters of the Signory, blowing clarions adorned with pennons. The lily of Florence is on these trappings. Serving men carry vases and basins toward the Adimari palace, in preparation for the wedding feast. A large portion of the square is covered in with a white and red awning.

If the chroniclers and painters enable us to form some conception of Florentine festivity, we are introduced to the persons and pastimes of these jovial

companies by the poet Folgore da San Gemignano.[1] Two sets of his Sonnets have been preserved, the one upon the Months, addressed to the leader of a noble Sienese company; the other on the Days, to a member of a similar Florentine society. If we are right in reckoning Folgore among the poets of the thirteenth century, the facility and raciness of his style, its disengagement from Provençalising pedantry, and the irony of his luxurious hedonism, prove to what extent the Tuscans had already left the middle age behind them.[2] Folgore, in spite of his spring fragrance and auroral freshness, anticipates the spirit of the Renaissance. He is a thirteenth-century Boccaccio, without Boccaccio's enthusiasm for humane studies. Ideal love, asceticism, religion, the virtues of the Christian and the knight, are not for him. His soul is set on the enjoyment of the hour. But this materialism is presented in a form of art so temperate, with

[1] The date commonly assigned to Folgore is 1260, and the Niccolò he addresses in his series on the Months has been identified with that

Nicolò, che la costuma ricca
Del garofano prima discoperse,

so ungently handled by Dante in the *Inferno*, Canto xxix. I am aware that grave doubts, based upon historical allusions in Folgore's miscellaneous sonnets, have been raised as to whether we can assign so early a date to Folgore, and whether his Brigata was really the *brigata goderecia, spendereccia*, of Siena alluded to by Dante. See Bartoli, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, vol. ii. cap. 11, for a discussion of these points. See also Giulio Navone's edition of Folgore's and Cene's *Rime*, Bologna, Romagnoli, 1880. This editor argues forcibly for a later date—not earlier at all events than from 1300 to 1320. But, whether we choose the earlier date 1260 or the later 1315, Folgore may legitimately be used for my present purpose of illustration.

[2] This is equally true of Cene dalla Chitarra's satirical parodies of the Months, in which, using the same rhymes as Folgore, he turns each of his motives to ridicule. Cene was a poet of Arezzo. His series and Folgore's will both be found in the *Poeti del Primo Secolo*, vol. ii., and in Navone's edition cited above.

colours so refined and outlines so delicately drawn, that there is nothing repulsive in it. His selfishness and sensuality are related to Aretino's as the miniatures of a missal to Giulio Romano's Modes of Venus.[1]

In his sonnets on the Months, Folgore addresses the Brigata as 'valiant and courteous above Lancelot, ready, if need were, with lance in rest, to spur along the lists of Camelot.' In January he gives them good fires and warm chambers, silken coverlids for their beds, and fur cloaks, and sometimes in the day to sally forth and snow-ball girls upon the square :

Uscir di fora alcuna volta il giorno,
Gittando della neve bella e bianca
A le donzelle, che staran dattorno.

February brings the pleasures of the chase. March is good for fishing, with merry friends at night, and never a friar to be seen :

Lasciate predicar i Frati pazzi,
Ch' hanno troppe bugie e poco vero.

[1] These remarks have to be qualified by reference to an unfinished set of five sonnets (Navone's edition, pp. 45–49), which are composed in a somewhat different key. They describe the arming of a young knight, and his reception by Valour, Humility, Discretion, and Gladness. Yet the knight, so armed and accepted, is no Galahad, far less the grim horseman of Dürer's allegory. Like the members of the *brigata goderecia*, he is rather a Gawain or Astolfo, all love, fine clothes, and courtship. Each of these five sonnets is a precious little miniature of Italian carpet-chivalry. The quaintest is the second, which begins :

Ecco prodezza che tostó lo spoglia,
E dice : amico e' convien che tu mudi,
Per ciò ch' i' vo' veder li uomini nudi,
E vo' che sappi non abbo altra voglia.

This exordium makes one regret that the painter of the young knight in our National Gallery (Giorgione?) had not essayed a companion picture. Valour disrobing him and taking him into her arms and crying *Queste carni m' ai offerte* would have made a fine pictorial allegory.

In April the 'gentle country all abloom with fair fresh grass' invites the young men forth. Ladies shall go with them, to ride, display French dresses, dance Provençal figures, or touch new instruments from Germany, or roam through spacious parks. May brings in tournaments and showers of blossoms —garlands and oranges flung from balcony and window—girls and youths saluting with kisses on cheeks and lips :

E pulzellette, giovene, e garzoni
Basciarsi nella bocca e nelle guance ;
D' amore e di goder vi si ragioni.

In June the company of youths and maidens quit the city for the villa, passing their time in shady gardens, where the fountains flow and freshen the fine grass, and all the folk shall be love's servants. July finds them in town again, avoiding the sun's heat and wearing silken raiment in cool chambers where they feast. In August they are off to the hills, riding at morn and eve from castle to castle, through upland valleys where streams flow. September is the month of hawking; October of fowling and midnight balls. With November and December winter comes again, and brings the fireside pleasures of the town. On the whole, there is too much said of eating and drinking in these sonnets; and the series concludes with a piece of inhumane advice :

E beffe far dei tristi cattivelli,
E miseri cattivi sciagurati
Avari : non vogliate usar con elli.

The sonnets on the Days breathe the same quaint medieval hedonism.[1] Monday is the day of songs

[1] If I were writing the history of early Tuscan poetry, I should wish

and love; our young man must be up betimes, to make his mistress happy:

Levati su, donzello, e non dormire;
Chè l' amoroso giorno ti conforta,
E vuol che vadi tua donna a fruire.

Tuesday is the day of battles and pitched fields; but these are described in mock-heroics, which show what the poet really felt about the pleasure of them. Wednesday is the day of banquets, when ladies and girls are waited on by young men wearing amorous wreaths:

E donzelletti gioveni garzoni
Servir, portando amorose ghirlande.

Thursday is the day of jousts and tourneys; Friday of hounds and horses; Saturday, of hawks and fowling-nets; Sunday, of 'dances and feats of arms in Florence':

Danzar donzelli, armeggiar cavalieri,
Cercar Fiorenza per ogni contrada,
Per piazze, per giardini, e per verzieri.

Such then was the joyous living, painted with colours of the fancy by a Tuscan poet, and realised in

here to compare the rarely beautiful poem of Lapo Gianni, *Amor eo chero*, with Folgore, and the masterly sonnets of Cecco Angiolieri of Siena, especially the one beginning *S' io fossi fuoco*, with Cene dalla Chitarra, in order to prove the fulness of sensuous and satirical inspiration in the age preceding Dante. Lapo wishes he had the beauty of Absalom, the strength of Samson; that the Arno would run balm for him, her walls be turned to silver and her paving-stones to crystal; that he might abide in eternal summer gardens among thousands of the loveliest women, listening to the songs of birds and instruments of music. The voluptuousness of Folgore is here heightened to ecstasy. Cecco desires to be fire, wind, sea, God, that he might ruin the world; the emperor, that he might decapitate its population; death, that he might seek out his father and mother; life, that he might fly from both; being Cecco, he would fain take all fair women, and leave the foul to his neighbours. The spite of Cene is deepened to insanity.

Florence at the close of that eventful century which placed the city under Guelf rule, in the plenitude of peace, equality, and wealth by sea and land. Distinctions of class had been obliterated. The whole population enjoyed equal rights and equal laws. No man was idle; and though the simplicity of the past, praised by Dante and Villani, was yielding to luxury, still the pleasure-seekers were controlled by that fine taste which made the Florentines a race of artists.[1] This halcyon season was the boyhood of Dante and Giotto, the prime of Arnolfo and Cimabue. The buildings whereby the City of the Flower is still made beautiful above all cities of Italian soil, were rising. The people abode in industry and order beneath the sway of their elected leaders. Supreme in Tuscany, fearing no internal feuds, strong in their militia of thirty thousand burghers to repel a rival State, the Florentines had reached the climax of political prosperity. Not as yet had arisen that little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, above Pistoja, which was destined to plunge them into the strife of Blacks and Whites. During that interval of windless calm, in that fair city, where the viol and the lute were never silent through spring-tide and summer, the star of Italian poetry, that 'crowning glory of unblemished wealth,' went up and filled the heavens with light.

[1] See *Paradiso*, xv.; Giov. Vill. vi. 69.

CHAPTER II.

THE TRIUMVIRATE.

Chivalrous Poetry—Ideal of Chivalrous Love—Bolognese Erudition—New Meaning given to the Ideal—Metaphysics of the Florentine School of Lyrists—Guido Cavalcanti—Philosophical Poems—Popular Songs—Cino of Pistoja—Dante's *Vita Nuova*—Beatrice in the *Convito* and the *Paradiso*—The Preparation for the *Divine Comedy* in Literature—Allegory—The *Divine Comedy*—Petrarch's Position in Life—His Conception of Humanism—Conception of Italy—His Treatment of Chivalrous Love—Beatrice and Laura—The *Canzoniere*—Boccaccio, the Florentine Bourgeois—His Point of View—His Abandonment of the Chivalrous Standpoint—His Devotion to Art—Anticipates the Renaissance—The *Decameron*—*Commedia Umana*—Precursors of Boccaccio—Novels—*Carmina Vagorum*—Plan of the Book—Its Moral Character—The *Visione Amorosa*—Boccaccio's Descriptions—The *Teseide*—The *Rime*—The *Filocopo*—The *Filostrato*—The *Ameto*, *Fiammetta*, *Ninfale*, *Corbaccio*—Prose before Boccaccio—*Fioretti di San Francesco* and *Decameron* compared—Influence of Boccaccio over the Prose Style of the Renaissance—His Death—Close of the Fourteenth Century—Sacchetti's Lament.

THE Sicilians followed closely in the track of the Provençal poets. After, or contemporaneously with them, the same Italo-Provençal literature was cultivated in the cities of central Italy. The subject-matter of this imitative poetry was love—but love that bore a peculiar relation to ordinary human feeling. Woman was regarded as an ideal being, to be approached with worship bordering on adoration. The lover derived personal force, virtue, elevation, energy, from his enthusiastic passion. Honour, justice, courage, self-sacrifice, contempt of worldly goods,

flowed from that one sentiment; and love united two wills in a single ecstasy. Love was the consummation of spiritual felicity, which surpassed all other modes of happiness in its beatitude. Thus Bernard de Ventadour and Jacopo da Lentino were ready to forego Paradise unless they might behold their lady's face before the throne of God. For a certain period in modern history, this mysticism of the amorous emotion was no affectation. It formulated a genuine impulse of manly hearts, inflamed by beauty, and touched with the sense of moral superiority in woman, perfected through weakness and demanding physical protection. By bringing the cruder passions into accord with gentle manners and unselfish aspirations, it served to temper the rudeness of primitive society; and no little of its attraction was due to the conviction that only refined natures could experience it. This new aspect of love was due to chivalry, to Christianity, to the Teutonic reverence for women, in which religious awe seems to have blended with the service of the weaker by the stronger.

Sincere and beautiful as the ideal of chivalrous love may have been, it speedily degenerated. Chivalry, though a vital element of feudalism, existed, even among the nations of its origin, more as an aspiration than a reality. In Italy it never penetrated the life or subdued the imagination of the people. For the Italo-Provençal poets that code of love was almost wholly formal. They found it ready made. They used it because the culture of a Court, in sympathy with feudal Europe, left them no other choice. Not Arthur, but the Virgilian Æneas, was still the Italian hero;

and instead of S. Louis, the nations of the South could only boast of a crusading Frederick II. Frederick the troubadour was a no less anomalous being than Frederick the crusader. He conformed to contemporary fashion, but his spirit ran counter to the age. Curiosity, incipient humanism, audacious doubt, the toleration which inclined him to fraternise with Saracens and seek the learning of the Arabs, placed him outside the sphere of thirteenth-century conceptions. His expedition to the East appears a mere parade excursion, hypocritical, political, ironical. In like manner his love-poetry and that of his courtiers rings hollow in our ears.

It harmonised with the Italian genius, when Guido Guinicelli treated chivalrous love from the standpoint of Bolognese learning. He altered none of the forms; he used the conventional phraseology. But he infused a new spirit into the subject-matter. His poetry ceased to be formal; the phrases were no longer verbiage. The epicureanism of Frederick's life clashed with the mystic exaltation of knighthood. There was no discord between Guido's scientific habit of mind and his expression of a philosophical idea conveyed in terms of amorous enthusiasm. Upon his lips the words:

> Al cor gentil ripara sempre Amore,
> Come l'augello in selva alla verdura;
> Nè fe' Amore anti che gentil core,
> Nè gentil cor anti che Amor, Natura

acquire reality—not the reality of passion, but of sincere thought. They do not convey the spontaneity of feeling, but a philosopher's contemplation of love

and beauty in their influence on human character. Guido's mood might be compared with that of the Greek sage, when he exclaimed that neither the morning nor the evening star is so wonderful as Justice, or when he thus apostrophised Virtue:

> Virtue, to men thou bringest care and toil;
> Yet art thou life's best, fairest spoil!
> O virgin goddess, for thy beauty's sake
> To die is delicate in this our Greece,
> Or to endure of pain the stern, strong ache.

For the chivalrous races, Love had been an enthusiastic ideal. For the Italo-Provençal euphuists it supplied an artificial inspiration. At Bologna it became the form of transcendental science; and here the Italian intellect touched, by accident or instinct, the same note that had been struck by Plato in the 'Phædrus' and 'Symposium.'

A public trained in legal and scholastic studies, whose mental furniture was drawn from S. Thomas and Accursius, hailed their poet in Guido Guinicélli. For them it was natural that poetry should veil philosophy with verse; that love should be confounded with the movement of the soul toward truth; that beauty should be treated as the manifestation of a spiritual good. Dante in his Canzone, *Donne ch' avete intelletto d' amore*, appeals, not to emotion, but to intelligence. He tells us that *understanding* was the ancient name of *love*, and describes the effect of passion in a young man's heart as a revelation raising him above the level of common experience. Thus the transmutation of the simpler elements of the chivalrous code into philosophical doctrine, where the form of the

worshipped lady transcends the sphere of sense, and her spirit is identified with the lover's deepest thought and loftiest aspiration, was sincere in medieval Florence. The Tuscan intellect was too virile and sternly strung to be satisfied with amorous rhymes. The contemporary theory of æsthetics demanded allegory, and imposed upon the poet erudition; nor was it easy for the singer of that epoch to command his own immediate emotions, or to use them for the purposes of a direct and plastic art. Enjoying neither the freedom of the Greek nor the disengagement of the modern spirit, he found it more proper to clothe a scientific content with the veil of passion, than to paint the personality of the woman he loved with natural precision. Between the mysticism of a sublime but visionary adoration on the one side, and the sensualities of vulgar appetite or the decencies of married life on the other, there lay for him no intermediate artistic region. He understood the love of the imagination and the love of the senses; but the love of the heart, familiar to the Northern races, hardly existed for him.

And here it may be parenthetically noticed that the Italians, in the middle ages, created no feminine ideal analogous to Gudrun or Chriemhild, Iseult or Guinevere. When they left the high region of symbolism, they descended almost without modulation to the prose of common life. Thus the Selvaggia of Cino, the Beatrice of Dante, the Laura of Petrarch, made way for the Fiammetta of Boccaccio and the women of the Decameron, when that ecstasy of earlier enthusiasm was exhausted. For a while, however, the Florentines were well prepared to give an intellectual significance,

and with it a new life, to the outworn conventions of the Italo-Provençal lyrists. Nor must it be thought that the emotions thus philosophised were unreal. Dante loved Beatrice, though she became for him an allegory. The splendid vision of her beauty and goodness attended him through life, assuming the guidance of his soul in all its stages. Difficult as it may be to comprehend this blending of the real and transcendental, we must grasp it if we desire to penetrate the spirit of the fourteenth century in Italy.

The human heart remains unchanged. No metaphysical sophistication, no allegory, no scholastic mysticism, can destroy the spontaneity of instinct in a man who loves, or cloud a poet's vision. Love does not cease to be love because it is sublimed to the quintessence of a self-denying passion. It still retains its life in feeling, and its root in sense. Beauty does not cease to be beautiful because it has been moralised and identified with the attraction that lifts men upward to the sphere of the eternal truths. Nor is poetry extinguished because the singer deems it his vocation to utter genuine thought, and scorns the rhyming pastimes of the simple amourist. The Florentine school presents us with a poetry which aimed at being philosophical, but which at the same time vibrated with life and delineated moods of delicate emotion. To effect a flawless fusion between these two strains in the new style, was infinitely difficult; nor were the poets of that epoch equally successful. Guido Cavalcanti, the leader of the group which culminates in Dante, won his fame by verse that savours more of the dialectician than the singer. Ranking science above poetry, he is said to

have disdained even Virgil. His odes are drily scholastic—especially that famous *Donna mi pricga*, which contemporaries studied clause by clause, and which, after two centuries, served Dino del Garbo for the text of a metaphysical discourse.[1] At the same time, certain lyrics, composed in a lighter mood by the same poet, have in them the essence of spontaneous and natural inspiration. His Ballate were probably regarded by himself and his friends as playthings, thrown off in idle moments to distract a mind engaged in thorny speculations. Yet we find here the first full blossom of genuine Italian verse. Their beauty is that of popular song, starting flowerlike from the soil, and fragrant in its first expansion beneath the sun of courtesy and culture. Nothing remained, in this kind, for Boccaccio and Poliziano, but to echo the Ballata of the country maidens, and to complete the welcome to the May.[2]

Two currents of verse, the one rising from the senses, the other from the brain, the one deriving force and fulness from the people, the other nourished by the schools, flowed apart in Guido Cavalcanti's poetry. They were combined into a single stream by Cino da Pistoja.[3] Cino was a jurist of encyclopædic erudition,

[1] *Rime di Guido Cavalcanti, edite ed inedite*, etc. Firenze, 1813. See p. 29 for the Canzone, and p. 73 for a translation into Italian of Dino's Latin commentary.

[2] *Op. cit.* pp. 21–27. Two in particular, *Era in pensier* and *Gli occhi di quella gentil forosetta*, may be singled out. A *pastourelle*, *In un boschetto*, anticipates the manner of Sacchetti. As for the May song, its opening lines, *Ben venga Maggio*, etc., are referred by Carducci to Guido Cavalcanti.

[3] See *Vita e Poesie di Messer Cino da Pistoja*, Pisa, Capurro, 1813. Also Barbèra's diamond edition of Cino da Pistoja and other poets, edited by Carducci.

as well as a sweet and fluent singer.[1] His verses have the polish and something of the chill of marble. His Selvaggia deserves a place with Beatrice and Laura. From Cino Petrarch derived his mastery of limpid diction. In Cino the artistic sense of the Italians awoke. He produced something distinct both from the scientific style of Guido Guinicelli, and also from the wilding song which Guido Cavalcanti's Ballate echoed. He seems to have applied himself to the main object of polishing poetical diction, and rendering expression at once musical and lucid.[2] Though his hold upon ideas was not so firm as Cavalcanti's, nor his passion so intense, he achieved a fusion of thought and feeling in an artistic whole of sympathetic suavity. We instinctively compare his work with that of Mino da Fiesole in bas-relief.

Dante was five years older than Cino. To him belongs the glory of having effected the same fusion in a lyric poetry at once more comprehensive and more lofty. Dante yields no point as a dialectician and subtle thinker to Guido Cavalcanti. He surpasses Cino da Pistoja as an artist. His passion and imagination are more fiery than Guido's. His tenderness is deeper and more touching than Cino's. Even

[1] The tomb of Cino in the Duomo at Pistoja, with its Gothic canopies and the bas-reliefs which represent a Doctor of Laws lecturing to men of all ranks and ages at their desks beneath his professorial chair, is a fine contemporary monument. The great jurist is here commemorated, not the master of Petrarch in the art of song.

[2] Cp. Dante *De Vulg. Eloq.* i. 17, upon Cino's purification of Italian from vulgarisms, with Lorenzo de' Medici, who calls Cino 'tutto delicato e veramente amoroso, il quale primo, al mio parere, cominciò l' antico rozzore in tutto a schifare.' *Lettera all' illustr. Sig. Federigo*, Poesie (ed. Barbèra, 1858), p. 33.

In those minor works with which he preluded the Divine Comedy, Dante soars above all competition, taking rank among the few poets born to represent an age and be the everlasting teachers of the human soul. Yet even Dante, though knowing that he was destined to eclipse both the Guidi, though claiming Love alone for his inspirer, was not wholly free from the scholasticism of his century. In the earlier lyrics of the *Vita Nuova* and in the Canzoni of the *Convito*, he allows his feeling to be over-weighted by the scientific content. Between his emotion and our sympathy there rises, now and again, the mist of metaphysic. While giving them intenser meaning, he still plays upon the commonplaces of his predecessors. Thus in the sonnet *Amor e 'l cor gentil son una cosa* he rehandles Guinicelli's theme; while the following stanza repeats the well-worn doctrine that Love should be the union of beauty and of excellence[1]:

Che la beltà che Amore in voi consente,
A virtù solamente
Formata fu dal suo decreto antico,
Contro lo qual fallate.
Io dico a voi che siete innamorate,
Che se beltate a voi
Fu data, e virtù a noi,
Ed a costui di due potere un fare,
Voi non dovreste amare,
Ma coprir quanto di beltà vi è dato,
Poichè non è virtù, ch' era suo segno.

Dante's concessions to the mannerism of the school weigh as nothing in the scales against the beauty and the truth of that most spiritual of romances, to

[1] *Il Canzoniere* (Fraticelli's edition), p. 199.

which the *Vita Nuova* gives melodic utterance. Within the compass of one little book is bound up all that Florence in the thirteenth century contributed to the refinement of medieval manners, together with all that the new school of poets had imagined of highest in their philosophical conception. The harmony of life and science attains completion in the real but idealised experience, which transcends and combines both motives in a personality uniquely constituted for this blending. It is enough for the young Dante to meet Beatrice, to pass her among her maidens in the city-ways, to receive her salute, to admire her moving through the many-coloured crowd, to meditate upon her apparition, as of one of God's angels, in the solitude of his chamber. She is a dream, a vision. But it is the dream of his existence, the vision that unfolds for him the universe—more actual, more steeped in emotion, more stimulative of sublime aspiration and virile purpose than many loves which find fruition in long years of intercourse. We feel that the man's true self has been revealed to him ; that he has given his life-blood to the ideal which, without this nourishment, would have ranked among phantoms, but is now reality. Students who have not followed the stages through which the doctrine of chivalrous love reached Dante, and the process whereby it was transmuted into science for the guidance of the soul, will regard the records of the *Vita Nuova* as shadowy or sentimental. Or if they only dwell upon the philosophical aspect of Dante's work, if they do not make allowance for the natural stirring of a heart that throbbed with liveliest feeling, they will fail to com-

prehend this book, at once so complex and so simple. The point lies exactly in the fusion of two elements—in the truth of the passion, the truth of the idealisation, and the spontaneity of the artistic form combining them. What is most intelligible, because most common to all phases of profound emotion, in the *Vita Nuova*, is its grief—the poet's sympathy with Beatrice in the house of mourning for her father's death, the vision of her own passage from earth to heaven, and the apostrophe to the pilgrims who thread the city clothed with mourning for her loss.[1] No one, reading these poems, will doubt that, though Beatrice did but cross the path of Dante's life and shed her brightness on it for a season from afar, the thought of her had penetrated heart and fibre, making him a man newborn through love, and striking in his soul a note that should resound through all his years, through all the centuries which grow to understand him.

Dante was born in 1265 of poor but noble parents, who reconciled themselves to the Guelf party. He first saw Beatrice in his ninth year; and, when a man, he well remembered how her beauty dawned upon him.[2] 'Her dress, on that day, was of a most noble colour, a subdued and goodly crimson, girdled and adorned in such sort as best suited with her very tender age. At that moment, I say most truly that the spirit of life, which hath its dwelling in the secretest chamber of the heart, began to tremble so violently that the least pulses of my body shook therewith; and

[1] *Voi che portate; Donna pietosa; Deh peregrini.*

[2] See Rossetti's translation of the *Vita Nuova*.

in trembling it said these words: *Ecce deus fortior mè, qui veniens dominabitur mihi.*' Beatrice died in 1290, and Dante closed the *Vita Nuova* with these words[1]: 'It was given unto me to behold a very wonderful vision; wherein I saw things which determined me that I would say nothing further of this most blessed one, until such time as I could discourse more worthily concerning her. And to this end I labour all I can; as she well knoweth. Wherefore if it be His pleasure through whom is the life of all things, that my life continue with me a few years, it is my hope that I shall yet write concerning her what hath not before been written of any woman. After the which, may it seem good unto Him who is the Master of Grace, that my spirit should go hence to behold the glory of its lady: to wit, of that blessed Beatrice who now gazeth continually on His countenance *qui est per omnia sæcula benedictus. Laus Deo.*'

This passage was written possibly in Dante's twenty-eighth year. The consecration of his younger manhood was the love of Beatrice. She made him a poet. Through her came to him the 'sweet new style,' which shone with purest lustre in his verse; and the songs he made of Beatrice were known through all the City of the Flower. Yet love had not absorbed his energies. He studied under Brunetto Latini, and qualified himself for the career of a Florentine citizen by entering the Guild of Speziali. After Beatrice's death a great and numbing sorrow fell upon him. From this eclipse he recovered by the

[1] Rossetti's translation of the *Vita Nuova*.

help of reading, and also by the distractions of public life. He fought in the battle of Campaldino, and married his wife Gemma Donati. He went as ambassador to San Gemignano in 1299; and in the year 1300, when Florence was divided by the parties of Cerchi and Donati, he fulfilled the functions of the Priorate. These ten years between Beatrice's death and Dante's election as Prior were a period of hesitation and transition. He was no longer the poet of Divine Love, inspired by spontaneous emotion, mastering and glorifying the form which tradition imposed on verse. He had become a student of philosophy; and this change makes itself felt in the more abstruse and abstract odes of the *Convito*. Yet he was still attended, through those years of study, civic engagements and domestic duties, by the vision of Beatrice. This is how he speaks of science in the second part of the *Convito*: 'After some time my mind, which strove to regain strength, bethought itself (since neither my own consolations nor those of friends availed me aught) of having recourse to the method which had helped to comfort other spirits in distress. I took to reading the book, not known to many students, of Boethius, wherewith, unhappy and in exile, he had comforted himself. And hearing also that Tully had written another book in which, while treating of friendship, he had used words of consolation to Lælius in the death of his friend Scipio, I read that also, and as it happens that a man goes seeking silver, and far from his design finds gold, which hidden causes yield him, not perchance without God's guidance, so I who sought for consolation found not only comfort for my

tears, but also words of authors and of sciences and of books, weighing the which, I judged well that philosophy, the lady of these authors, of these sciences and of these books, was a thing supreme. And I imagined her in fashion like a gentle lady, nor could I fancy her otherwise than piteous; wherefore so truly did I gaze upon her with adoring eyes that scarcely could I turn myself away. And having thus imagined her I began to go where she displayed her very self, that is in the schools of the religious, and the disputations of philosophers; so that in short time, about thirty months, I began so much to feel her sweetness that her love chased away and destroyed all other thought in me.'

Beatrice, who in her lifetime had been the revelation of beauty and all good, lifting her lover above the region of sordid thoughts, and opening a sphere of spiritual intelligence, now accompanied him through the labyrinths of speculation. She was still the form, the essence, of all he learned; and the vow which closes the *Vita Nuova* had not been forgotten.

Through the transition period, marked by the *Convito*, we are led to the third stage of Dante's life—those twenty-one years, during which he roamed in exile over Italy, and wrote the poem of medieval Christianity. The studies of which the *Convito* forms a fragment, and the political career which ended in the embassy to Boniface, were both necessary for the *Divine Comedy*. Had it not been for Dante's exile, the modern world might have lacked its first and greatest epic; Beatrice might have missed her promised apotheosis. As her hand had guided him through the paths of love and the labyrinths of

science, so now the brightness of her glorified face lifted him from sphere to sphere of Paradise. By gazing on her eyes, he rose through heaven, and stood with her before the splendour of the Beatific Vision. To identify Beatrice with Theology in this last stage of Dante's spiritual life is a facile but inadequate expedient of criticism. From the earliest she had been for him the light and guidance of his soul; and at the last he ascribed to her the best and the sublimest of his inspirations.

Since its origin Italian poetry had pursued one line of evolution, first following and then transmuting the traditions of Provence. In the *Divine Comedy* it took a new direction. Chivalry, insufficient for the nation and ill-adapted to its temper, yielded to a motive force derived from the religious sentiment. The Bible history, the Lives of the Saints, and the doctrine of the Church concerning the future of mankind, together with the emotions of piety, had hitherto received but partial exposition at the hands of a few poets of the people. S. Francis struck the keynote of popular Italian poetry in his *Cantico del Sole*, which can be accepted as the first specimen of composition in the vulgar tongue. Guittone of Arezzo, already mentioned as the earliest learned poet who attempted to nationalise his style, acquired fame as the writer of one sublime sonnet to Madonna and two Canzoni to the Mother and her Son.[1] But the most decisive impulse toward religious poetry was given by the Flagel-

[1] *Donna del cielo; O benigna, o dolce; O bon Gesù.* See *Rime di Fra Guittone d' Arezzo* (Firenze, Morandi, 1828), vol. ii. pp. 212, 3; vol. i. p. 61.

lants, who, starting from the Umbrian highlands in 1290, diffused their peculiar devotion over Italy. I shall have occasion to return in a future chapter to the history of this movement and to trace its influence over popular Italian literature. It is enough, at present, to have mentioned it among the forces tending toward religious poetry upon the close of the thirteenth century.

The spirit of the epoch inclined to Allegory and Vision. When we remember the prestige of Virgil in the middle ages, both as a philosopher and also as the precursor of Christianity, it will be understood how his descent into Hades fascinated the imagination, and prepared the mind to accept the Vision as a proper form for conveying theological doctrine.[1] The Journey of S. Brandan, the Purgatory of S. Patrick, and the Visions of Tundalus and Alberic pretended to communicate information concerning the soul's state after death, the places of punishment, and the method of salvation. In course of time the Vision was used for political or ecclesiastical purposes by preachers who averred that they had seen the souls of eminent sinners in torment. It became an engine of terrorism, assumed satiric tone, and finally fell into the hands of didactic or merely fanciful poets.[2]

The chief preoccupation of the medieval mind was with the future destiny of man. This life came to be

[1] Not only the sixth *Æneid*, but the *Dream of Scipio* also, influenced the medieval imagination. The Biblical visions, whether allegorical like those of Ezekiel and Paul, or apocalyptic like S. John's, exercised a similar control.

[2] See the little book of curious learning by Alessandro d' Ancona, entitled *I Precursori di Dante*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1874.

regarded as a preparation for eternity. Like a foreground, the actual world served to relieve the picture of the world beyond the grave. Therefore popular literature abounded in manuals of devotion and discipline, some of which set forth the history of the soul in allegorical form. Among other examples may be cited three stories of the spiritual life, corresponding to its three stages of Nature, Purification, and Restoration, conveyed under the titles of *Umano, Spoglia, Rinuova.* Many prelusions of this class were combined in one religious drama called *Commedia dell' Anima,* the substance of which is certainly old, though the form yields evidence of sixteenth-century *rifacimento.*[1]

The object of the foregoing paragraphs has been to show that the popular intellect was well prepared for religious poetry, and had appropriated the forms of Allegory and Vision. Not in order to depreciate the originality of Dante, but to prove in how vital a relation he stood toward his age, I have here insisted on those formless preludes to his work of art. In the Epistle to Can Grande he thus explains the theme of the *Commedia* : ' The subject of the whole work, taken literally, is the state of souls after death, regarded as fact; for the action deals with this, and is about this.

[1] See De Sanctis, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana,* vol. i. chap. 5. Of the *Commedia Spirituale dell' Anima* I have seen a Sienese copy of the date 1608, a reprint from some earlier Florentine edition. The Comedy is introduced by two boys, good and bad. The piece itself brings God as the Creator, the soul He has made, its guardian angel, the devil, the powers of Memory, Reason, Will, and all the virtues in succession, with corresponding vices, on the scene. It ends with the soul's judgment after death and final marriage to Christ. Dramatically, it is almost devoid of merit.

But if the work be taken allegorically, its subject is man, in so far as by merit or demerit in the exercise of free will he is exposed to the rewards or punishments of justice.' Attending to the letter, we find in the *Commedia* a vision of that life beyond the tomb, in relation to which alone our life on earth has value. It presents a picture of the everlasting destiny of souls, so firmly apprehended and vividly imagined by the medieval fancy. But since this picture has to set forth mysteries seen and heard by none, the revelation itself, like S. John's Apocalypse, is conveyed in symbols fashioned to adumbrate the truths perceived by faith. The same symbols portray another reality, not apprehended merely by faith, but brought home to the heart by experience. Attending to the allegory, we find in the *Commedia* a history of the soul in this life—an ethical analysis of sin, purgation and salvation through grace. The poem is a narrative of Dante's journey through the region into which all pass after death; but at the same time it describes the hell and heaven and the transition through repentance from sin to grace, which are the actual conditions of the soul in this life. The *Inferno* depicts unmitigated evil. The *Paradiso* exhibits goodness, absolute and free from stain. In the one there is no relief, in the other no alloy; the one is darkness, the other light. The intermediate region of the *Purgatorio* is a realm of expectation and conversion, where sin is no longer possible, but where the fruition of goodness is delayed by the necessity of purification. Here then are the natural alternations of day and night, the relative twilight of a world where all is yet transition rather

than fulfilment. It may be observed that Purgatory belongs to the order of things which by their nature pass away; while Hell and Heaven are both eternal. Therefore the *Commedia*, considered as an apocalypse of the undying soul, reveals absolute damnation and absolute salvation, both states being destined to endure so long as God's justice and love exist; but it also reveals a state of purifying pain, which ceases when the men who need it have been numbered. Considered as an allegory of the spiritual life on earth, it describes the process of escape from eternal condemnation through grace into eternal happiness.

A theme so vast and all-embracing enabled Dante to inform the whole knowledge of his epoch. The *Commedia* is the poem of that scholastic theology which absorbed every branch of science and brought the world within the scope of one thought, God. As the *Summa* of S. Thomas combined philosophy and revelation, so Dante included both the Pagan and Christian dispensations in his scheme. He starts from the wood of error, where men are assailed by the wild beasts of their passions; and two guides lead him, by the light of knowledge, up to God. The one is Virgil, the other Beatrice—Virgil, who stands for human reason, science, the four cardinal virtues; Beatrice, who symbolises divine grace, faith formulated in theology, the virtues bestowed on man through Christ for his salvation. Virgil cannot lead the poet beyond Purgatory; because thus far only is human knowledge of avail to elevate and guide the soul. Beatrice lifts him through the spheres of Paradise by

contemplation; because the highest summit attained by reason and natural virtue is but the starting-point of the true Christian's journey.

The *Commedia* is thus the drama or the epos of the soul. It condenses all that man has thought or done, can think or do; all that he knows about the universe around him, all that he hopes or fears from the future; his intuition of an incorruptible and ideal order, underlying and controlling the phenomenal world. God, the world and man are brought into one focus; and the interest of the poem is the relation of the individual soul to them, the participation of each human personality in the dramatic action. It need hardly be observed that Dante's solutions of the problems which arise in the development of this theme, are medieval. His physical science has been superseded. His theology is far from approving itself to the general consciousness of Christians in our age. Yet while all must recognise this obvious truth, the essence of the *Commedia* is indestructible because of its humanity, because of the personality which animates it. Men change far less than the hypotheses of religion and philosophy, which take form from experience as shadows fly before the sun. However these may alter, man remains substantially the same; and Dante penetrated human nature as few have done—was such a man as few have been. The unity and permanence of his poem are in himself. Never was a plan so vast and various permeated so completely with a single self. At once creator and spectator of his vision, neophyte and hierophant, arraigned and judge, he has not only seen hell as the local prison-house of pain, but has felt it as the

state of sin within his heart. He has passed through purifying fires; and the songs of Paradise have sounded by anticipation in his ears. Dante is both the singer and the hero of his epic. In him the universal idea of mankind becomes concrete. The continuous experience of this living person, who is at one and the same time a figure of each and every soul that ever breathed, and also the real Dante Alighieri, exile from Florence without blame, sustains as on one thread the medley of successive motives which else might lack poetic unity, gives life to a scheme which else might be too abstract. Expanding to embrace the universe, contracting to a point within one breast, the *Commedia* combines the general and the particular in an individual commensurate with man.

It may be conjectured that Dante, obeying the scholastic impulse of his age, started from the abstract or universal. Therein lay the reality of things, not in the particular. What has been already quoted from the letter to Can Grande justifies this supposition. He meant to lay bare the scheme of the universe, as understood by medieval Christianity, and viewed from the standpoint of the human agent. That scheme presented itself in a series of propositions, a logic or a metaphysic apprehended as truth. Each portion of the poem was mapped out with rigorous accuracy. Each section illustrated a thought, an argument, a position. The whole might be surveyed as a structure of connected syllogisms. To this scientific articulation of its leading motives corresponds the architectural symmetry, the simple outlines and severe masses of the *Commedia*. The plan, however minute in detail,

is comprehended at a glance. The harmonies of the design are as geometrical as some colossal church imagined by Bramante. But Dante had no intention of re-writing the *Summa* in verse. He meant to be a poet, using the vulgar speech of 'that low Italy' in the production of an epic which should rank on equal terms with the *Æneid*, and be for modern Christendom what that had been for sacred Rome. Furthermore he had it in his heart to yield such honour to Virgil, 'leader, lord, and master,' as none had ever paid, and to write concerning Beatrice 'what had not before been written of any woman.' His poem was to be the storehouse of his personal experience. His love and hatred, his admiration of greatness and his scorn for cowardice, his resentment of injury, his gratitude for service rendered, his political creed and critical opinions, the joy he had of nature, and the pain he suffered when he walked with men: all this was to find expression at right seasons and in seemly order. Upon the severe framework of abstract truth, which forms the skeleton of the *Commedia* and is the final end of its existence, Dante felt free to superimpose materials of inexhaustible variety. Following the metaphor of building more exactly, we may say that he employed these materials as the stones whereby he brought his architectural design to view. The abstract thought of the *Commedia*, tyrannous and all-controlling as it is, could not lay claim to reality but for the dramatic episodes which present it to the intellect through the imagination.

Some such clothing of abstractions with concrete images was intended in the medieval theory of allegory.

The Church proscribed the poets of antiquity; and it had become an axiom that poetry was the art of lies.[1] Poetry was hardly suffered to exist except as a veil to cloak some hidden doctrine; and allegory presented a middle way of escape, whereby the pleasure of art could be enjoyed with a safe conscience. Virgil, whom the middle ages would not have relinquished, though a General Council had condemned him, received the absolution of allegorical interpretation. Dante, who defined poetry as the art 'which publishes the truth concealed beneath a veil of fable,' frequently interrupts the story to bid his readers note the meaning underneath the figures of his verse. In composing the *Commedia*, he had moral edification and scientific truth for his end. The dramatic, narrative, descriptive, and lyrical beauties of his poem served to bring into relief or to shroud in appropriate mystery—since allegory both elucidates and obscures the matter it conveys—the doctrines he designed to inculcate. Still Dante stood, as a poet, at a height so far above his age and his own theories, that the cold and numbing touch of symbolism rarely mars the interest of his work. We may, perhaps, feel a certain confusion between the personalities of Virgil and Beatrice and the thoughts they represent, which chills our sympathy, raising a feeling of indignation when Virgil returns unwept to Hell, and removing Beatrice into a world of intangible ideas. We may find the pageant at the close of the 'Purgatory' unattractive; nor will the sublimity of the 'Paradiso' save the figures by which spiritual meanings are here suggested, from

[1] See *Revival of Learning*, chapter ii.

occasional grotesqueness. Thus much can be conceded. Dante, though born to be the poet of all time, was still a scion of his epoch. He could not altogether escape the influences of a misleading conception. But, apart from allegory, apart from didactic purpose, the *Commedia* takes highest rank for the episodes, the action, the personal interest which never flags. No poet ever had a finer sense of reality, and none commanded the means of expressing it in all its forms more fully. Dante's own theory of symbolism offered an illimitable sphere for the exercise of his imagination, since it led him to give visible and palpable shape to the thoughts of his brain. And here it may be noted that the allegorical heresy proved less pernicious than another form of false opinion based upon an ideal of classical purity might have been. Since the poem was to present truth under a cloak of metaphor, it did not signify what figures were used. The purpose they served, justified them. Therefore Dante found himself at liberty to mingle satire with the hymns of angels; to seek illustrations from vulgar life no less than from nature in her sublimest moods; to delineate the horrible, the painful, the grotesque, and the improbable with the same sincerity as the beautiful, the charming, and the familiar. His dramatic faculty was exercised on themes so varied that to classify them is impossible—on the pathos of Francesca and the terror of Ugolino; the skirmish of the fiends in Malebolge and the meeting of Statius with Virgil; the pride of Farinata and the penitence of Manfred; the agonies of Adamo da Brescia and the calm delights of Piccarda dei Donati. He tells the stories of Ulysses

and S. Francis, describes the flight of the Roman eagle and Cacciaguida's manhood, with equal energy of brief but ineffaceably impressive narration. This licence inherent in the use of allegory justified his classing the fameless folk of his own days with the heroes of Biblical and classical antiquity, and permitted him to mingle ancient history with his censure of contemporary politics. All times, ages, countries, races of men are alike before the tribunal of God's justice. Accordingly, the poet who had taken man's moral nature for his theme, and was bound by his theory to present this theme symbolically, could bring to view a multitude of concrete persons, arranged (whatever else may issue from their converse with the protagonist) according to gradations of merit or demerit. Thus the *Divine Comedy*, though written with a didactic object and under the influence of allegory, surpasses every other epic in the distinctness of its motives and the realism of their presentation. The brief and pregnant style which scorns rhetorical adornment, the accurate picture-painting which aims at vivid delineation of the thing to be discerned, harmonise with its inflexible ethics, its uncompromising sincerity, its intense human feeling.

The *Commedia* is too widely commensurate with its theme, the Human Soul, to be described or classified. The men of its era called it the *Divine*; and this title it has preserved, in spite of the fierce censures of the Church which it contains. They called it *La Divina* because of its material doubtless, but also, we may dare to think, because of its unfathomable depth and height and breadth of thought.

In course of time chairs were established at Florence, Padua, and in other cities, for its explanation; and the labour of the commentator was applied to it. That labour has been continued from Boccaccio's down to our own day; yet the dark places of the *Commedia* have not been illuminated, nor is learning likely to solve some problems which perplex a careful student of its cantos. That matters, indeed, but little; for the main scope and purpose of the poem are plain, and its spirit is such that none who read can fail to recognise it.

Before Dante the Christian world had no poet, and Italy had no voice. The gift of Dante to Europe was an Epic on the one subject which united the modern nations in community of interest. The gift of Dante to his country was a masterpiece which placed her on a par with Homer's Hellas and with Virgil's Rome. If the first century of Italian literature could have produced three men of the calibre of Dante, Italy would have run her future course, as she began, abreast with ancient Greece. That was not, however, destined to be. The very conditions of the mission she had to fulfil in the fourteenth and two following centuries, rendered the emergence of a race of heroes impossible. Italy was about to recover the past. Her energies could not be concentrated on the evolution of herself in a new literature. To Dante succeeded Petrarch and Boccaccio.

Petrarch was born at Arezzo in the year 1304, when his father, like Dante, and in the same cause, had been expelled from Florence. His youth, passed partly in Tuscany and partly at Avignon, coincided with the years spent by Dante in the composition of

the *Commedia*. He was a student at Montpellier, neglecting his law-books for Cicero and Virgil, when Dante died at Ravenna in 1321. During those seventeen years of Dante's exile and Petrarch's boyhood, a change had passed over the political scene. The Papacy was transferred from Rome to France. The last attempts of the German Emperors to vindicate their authority below the Alps had failed. The Communes were yielding to anarchy and party feuds, or fast becoming the prey of despots. A new age had begun; and of this new age Petrarch was the representative, as Dante had been the poet of the ages which had passed away. Petrarch's inauguration of the classical Revival has been already described in this work; nor is it necessary to repeat the services he rendered to the cause of humanism.[1] In a volume dealing with Italian literature the poet of the *Canzoniere* must engage attention rather than the resuscitator of antique learning. It is Petrarch's peculiar glory to have held two equally illustrious places in the history of modern civilisation, as the final lyrist of chivalrous love and as the founder of the Renaissance. Yet this double attitude, when we compare him with Dante, constitutes the chief cause of his manifest inferiority.

The differences between Dante's and Petrarch's education were marked, and tended to accentuate the divergence of their intellectual and moral qualities. Dante, who lived until maturity within sight of his *bel*

[1] See above, *Revival of Learning*, chapter ii. I may also refer to an article by me in the *Quarterly Review* for October 1878, from which I shall have occasion to draw largely in the following pages.

San Giovanni, grew up a Florentine in core and fibre. In his earliest work, the *Vita Nuova*, there is a home-bred purity of style, as of something which could only have been perfected in Florence; a beauty akin to that of Giotto's tower; a perfume as of some flower peculiar to a district whence it will not bear transplanting. In his latest, the *Paradiso*, he devotes one golden canto to the past prosperity of Florence, another to her decadence through the corruption of her citizens. While wandering like 'the world's rejected guest' away from that fair city of his birth, the unrest of his pilgrimage, contrasted with the peace of earlier manhood, only strengthened the Florentine within him. Though he traversed Italy in length and breadth, though the *Commedia* furnishes an epitome of her landscapes and her local customs, describes her cities and resumes her history, the thought of national unity was not present to his mind. Italy remained for him the garden of the empire, the unruly colt whom Cæsar should bestride and curb. Elsewhere than in Florence Dante felt himself an alien. He refused the poet's crown unless it could be taken by the font of baptism upon the square of Florence. He chose banishment with honour and the stars of heaven, rather than ignominious entrance through the gates he loved so well; and yet from the highest sphere of Paradise he turned his eyes down to Florence and her erring folk:

> Io, ched era al divino dall' umano,
> Ed all' eterno dal tempo venuto,
> E di Fiorenza in popol giusto e sano.

Petrarch, called to perform another mission, had a

different training. Brought up from earliest infancy in exile, transferred from Tuscany to France, deprived of civic rights and disengaged from the duties of a burgher in those troublous times, he surveyed the world from his study and judged its affairs with the impartiality of a philosopher. Without a city, without a home, without a family, consecrated to the priesthood and absorbed in literary interests, he spent his life in musings at Vaucluse or in the splendid hospitalities of the Lombard Courts. Through all his wanderings he was a visitor, the citizen of no republic, but the freeman of the City of the Spirit. Without exaggeration he might have chosen for his motto the phrase of Marcus Aurelius: 'I will not say dear city of Cecrops but dear city of God!' Avignon, where his intellect was formed in youth, had become through the residence of the Popes the capital of Christendom, the only centre of political and ecclesiastical activity where an ideal of universal culture could arise. Itself in exile, the Papacy still united the modern nations by a common bond; but its banishment from Rome was the sign of a new epoch, when the hegemony of civilisation should be transferred from the Church to secular control. In this way Petrarch was enabled to shape a conception of humanism which left the middle age behind; and when his mind dwelt on Italy at a distance, he could think of her as the great Italic land, inheritor of Rome, mother of a people destined to be one, born to rule, or if not rule, at least to regenerate the world through wisdom. From his lips we hear of Florence nothing; but for the first time the passionate cry of *Italia mia*, the appeal of an Italian who recognised his

race, yet had no local habitation on the sacred soil, vibrates in his oratorical *canzoni*. Petrarch's dreams of a united Italy and a resuscitated Roman republic were hardly less visionary than Dante's ideal of universal monarchy with Rome for the seat of empire. Yet in his lyrics the true conception of Italy, one intellectually in spite of political discord and foreign oppression, the real and indestructible unity of the nation in a spirit destined to control the future of the human race, came suddenly to consciousness. There was an out-cry in their passion-laden strophes which gathered volume as the years rolled over Italy, until at last, in her final prostration beneath Spanish Austria, they seemed less poems than authentic prophecies.

Thus while Dante remained a Florentine, Petrarch was the first Italian. Nor is it insignificant that whereas Dante refused the poet's crown unless he could place the laurels on his head in Florence, Petrarch ascended the Capitol among the plaudits of the Romans, and, in the absence of Pope and Emperor, received his wreath from the Senator Romanus. Dante's renunciation and Petrarch's acceptance of this honour were equally appropriate. Dante, as was fitting for a man of his era, looked still to the Commune. Petrarch's coronation on the Capitol was the outward sign that the age of the Communes was over, that culture was destined to be cosmopolitan, and that the Eternal City, symbolising the imperishable empire of the intellect, was now the proper throne of men marked out to sway the world by thoughts and written words.

In Petrarch the particular is superseded by the

universal. The citizen is sunk in the man. The political prejudices of the partisan are conspicuous by absence. His language has lost all trace of dialect. He writes Italian, special to no district, though Tuscan in its source; and his verse fixes the standard of poetic diction for all time in Italy. These changes mark an important stage in literature emerging from its origins, and account for Petrarch's unequalled authority during the next three centuries. Dante's Epic is classical because of its vivid humanity and indestructible material; but its spirit is medieval and its details are strictly localised. Petrarch's outlook over the world and life is, in form at least, less confined to the limitations of his age. Consequently the students of a period passing rapidly beyond the medieval cycle of ideas, found no bar between his nature and their sympathies.

In his treatment of chivalrous love we may notice this tendency to generalisation. The material transmitted from the troubadours, handled with affectation by the Sicilians, philosophised by the Florentines, loses transient and specific quality in the *Canzoniere*. It takes rank at last among simply human emotions; and, though it has not lost a certain medieval tincture, the *Canzoniere* rather than the *Vita Nuova*, the work of distinguished rather than of supreme genius, has on this account been understood and appropriated by all lovers in all ages and in every land. Petrarch's verses, to use Shelley's words, 'are as spells, which unseal the inmost enchanted fountains of the delight which is the grief of love.' And while we admit that 'Dante understood the secrets of love even more than Petrarch,' there

is no doubt that the *Canzoniere* strikes a note which vibrates more universally than the *Vita Nuova*. The majority of men cannot but prefer the comprehensive to the intense expression of personal emotion.

Death rendered Beatrice's apotheosis conceivable; and Dante may be said to have rediscovered the Platonic mystery, whereby love is an initiation into the secrets of the spiritual world. It was the intuition of a sublime nature into the essence of pure impersonal enthusiasm. It was an exaltation of womanhood similar to that attempted less adequately by Shelley in *Epipsychidion*. It was a real instinct like that which pervades the poetry of Michelangelo, and which sustains some men even in our prosaic age. Still there remained an ineradicable unsubstantiality in Dante's point of view, when tested by the common facts of feeling. His idealism was too far removed from ordinary experience to take firm hold upon the modern mind. In proportion as Beatrice personified abstractions, she ceased to be a woman even for her lover; nor was it possible, except by diminishing her individuality, to regard her as a symbol of the universal. She passed from the sphere of the human into the divine; and though her face was still beautiful, it was the face of Science rather than of one we love. There was even too little alloy of earth in Dante's passion for Beatrice.

Petrarch's love for Laura was of a different type. The unrest of earthly desire, for ever thwarted but recurring with imperious persistence, and the rebellion of the conscience against emotions which the lover recognised as lawless, broke his peace. It is true that, using the language of the earlier poets and obey-

ing a sanguine mood of his own mind, he from time to time spoke of Laura as of one who led his soul to God. But his sincerest utterances reveal the discord of a heart divided between duty and inclination, the melancholy of a man who knows himself the prey of warring powers. His love for Laura seemed an error and a sin, because it clashed with an ascetic impulse which had never been completely blunted. In his Hymn to the Virgin he referred to this passion as the Medusa that had turned his better self to stone:

> Medusa e l' error mio m' han fatto un sasso
> D' umor van stillante.

There is a passage in the *De Remediis utriusque Fortunæ*, where the lyrist of chivalrous love pours such contempt on women as his friend Boccaccio might have envied. In the *Secretum*, again, he describes his own emotion as a torment from which he had vainly striven to emancipate himself by solitude, by journeys, by distractions, and by obstinate studies. In truth, he rarely alludes to the great passion of his life without a strange blending of tenderness and sore regret. Herein he proved himself not only a true child of his age, but also the precursor of the modern world. While he was still bound by the traditions of medieval asceticism, a Christian no less devout and only less firm than Dante, his senses and his imagination, stirred possibly by contact with classic literature, rebelled against the mysticism of the Florentine School. This rebellion, but dimly apprehended by the poet himself, and complicated with the yearnings of a deeply religious nature after purity of thought and deed, gave its supreme strength and beauty to his verse. The

Canzoniere is not merely the poetry of love but the poetry of conflict also. The men of the Renaissance overleaped the conflict, and satisfied themselves with empty idealisations of sensual desire. But modern men have returned to Petrarch's point of view and found an echo of their own divided spirit in his poetry. He marks the transition from a medieval to a modern mood, the passage from Cino and Guido to Werther and Rousseau.

That Laura was a real woman, and that Petrarch's worship of her was unfeigned; that he adored her with the senses and the heart as well as with the head; but that this love was at the same time more a mood of the imagination, a delicate disease, a cherished wound, to which he constantly recurred as the most sensitive and lively wellspring of poetic fancy, than a downright and impulsive passion, may be clearly seen in the whole series of his poems and his autobiographical confessions. Laura appears to have treated him with the courtesy of a somewhat distant acquaintance, who was aware of his homage and was flattered by it. But her lover enjoyed no privileges of intimacy, and it may be questioned whether, if Petrarch could by any accident have made her his own, the fruition of her love would not have been a serious interruption to the happiness of his life. He first saw her in the church of S. Claire, at Avignon, on April 6, 1327. She passed from this world on April 6, 1348. These two dates are the two turning-points of Petrarch's life. The interval of twenty-one years, when Laura trod the earth, and her lover in all his wanderings paid his orisons to her at morning, evening, and noonday, and passed his nights in

dreams of that fair form which never might be his, was the storm and stress period of his chequered career. There is an old Greek proverb that 'to desire the impossible is a malady of the soul.' With this malady in its most incurable form the poet was stricken; and, instead of seeking cure, he nursed his sickness and delighted in the discord of his spirit. From that discord he wrought the harmonies of his sonnets and *canzoni*. That malady made him the poet of all men who have found in their emotions a dreamland more wonderful and pregnant with delight than in the world which we call real. After Laura's death his love was tranquillised to a sublimer music. The element of discord had passed out of it; and just because its object was now physically unattainable, it grew in purity and power. The sensual alloy which, however spiritualised, had never ceased to disturb his soul, was purged from his still vivid passion. Laura in heaven looked down upon him from her station mid the saints; and her poet could indulge the dream that now at last she pitied him, that she was waiting for him with angelic eyes of love, and telling him to lose no time, but set his feet upon the stairs that led to God and her. The romance finds its ultimate apotheosis in that transcendent passage of the *Trionfo della Morte* which describes her death and his own vision. Throughout the whole course of this labyrinthine love-lament, sustained for forty years on those few notes so subtly modulated, from the first sonnet on his *primo giovenile errore* to the last line of her farewell, *tu starai in terra senza me gran tempo*, Laura grows in vividness before us. She only becomes a real woman in death,

because she was for Petrarch always an ideal, and in the ideal world beyond the tomb he is more sure of her than when 'the fair veil' of flesh was drawn between her and his yearning.

Petrarch succeeded in bringing the old theme of chivalrous love back from the philosophising mysticism of the Florentines to simple experience. He forms a link between their transcendental science and the positive romance of the Decameron, between the spirit of the middle ages and the spirit of the Renaissance. Guided by his master, Cino da Pistoja, the least metaphysical and clearest of his immediate predecessors, Petrarch found the right artistic *via media*; and perhaps we may attribute something to that double education which placed him between the influences of the Tuscan lyrists and the troubadours of his adopted country. At any rate he returned from the allegories of the Florentine poets to the directness of chivalrous emotion; but he treated the original motive with a greater richness and a more idealising delicacy than his Provençal predecessors. The marvellous instruments of the Italian Sonnet and Canzone were in his hands, and he knew how to draw from them a purer if not a grander melody than either Guido or Dante. The best work of the Florentines required a commentary; and the structure of their verse, like its content, was scientific rather than artistic Petrarch could publish his *Canzoniere* without explanatory notes. He laid his heart bare to the world, and every man who had a heart might understand his language. Between the subject-matter and the verbal expression there lay no intervening veil of mystic

meaning. The form had become correspondingly more clear and perfect, more harmonious in its proportions, more immediate in musical effects. In a word, Petrarch was the first to open a region where art might be free, and to find for the heart's language utterance direct and limpid.

This was his great achievement. The forms he used were not new. The subject-matter he handled was given to him. But he brought both form and subject closer to the truth, exercising at the same time an art which had hitherto been unconceived in subtlety, and which has never since been equalled. If Dante was the first great poet, Petrarch was the first true artist of Italian literature. It was, however, impossible that Petrarch should overleap at one bound all the barriers of the middle ages. His Laura has still something of the earlier ideality adhering to her. She stands midway between the Beatrice of Dante and the women of Boccaccio. She is not so much a woman with a character and personality, as woman in the general, *la femme*, personified and made the object of a poet's reveries. Though every detail of her physical perfections, with the single and striking exception of her nose, is carefully recorded, it is not easy to form a definite picture even of her face and shape. Of her inner nature we hear only the vaguest generalities. She sits like a lovely model in the midst of a beautiful landscape, like one of our Burne-Jones's women, who incarnate a mood of feeling while they lack the fulness of personality. The thought of her pervades the valley of Vaucluse; the perfume of her memory is in the air we breathe. But if we met her, we should find

it hard to recognise her; and if she spoke, we should not understand that it was Laura.

Petrarch had no strong objective faculty. Just as he failed to bring Laura vividly before us, until she had by death become a part of his own spiritual substance, so he failed to depict things as he saw them. The pictures etched in three or four lines of the *Purgatorio* may be sought for vainly in his *Rime*. That his love of nature was intense, there is no doubt. The solitary of Vaucluse, the pilgrim of Mont Ventoux, had reached a point of sensibility to natural scenery far in advance of his age. But when he came to express this passion for beauty, he was satisfied with giving the most perfect form to the emotion stirred in his own subjectivity. Instead of scenes, he delineates the moods suggested by them. He makes the streams and cliffs and meadows of Vaucluse his confidants. He does not lose himself in contemplation of the natural object, though we feel that this self found its freest breathing-space, its most delightful company, in the society of hill and vale. He never cares to paint a landscape, but contents himself with such delicate touches and such cunning combinations of words as may suggest a charm in the external world. At this point the humanist, preoccupied with man as his main subject, meets the poet in Petrarch. What is lost, too, in the precision of delineation, is gained in universality. The *Canzoniere* reminds us of no single spot; wherever there are clear fresh rills and hanging mountains, the lover walks with Petrarch by his side.

If the poet's dominant subjectivity weakened his grasp upon external things, it made him supreme in

self-portraiture. Every mood of passion is caught and fixed precisely in his verse. The most evanescent shades of feeling are firmly set upon the exquisite picture. Each string of Love's many-chorded lyre is touched with a vigorous hand. The fluctuations of hope, despair, surprise; the 'yea and nay twinned in a single breath;' the struggle of conflicting aspirations in a heart drawn now to God and now to earth; the quiet resting-places of content; the recrudescence of the ancient smart; the peace of absence, when longing is luxury; the agony of presence, adding fire to fire —all this is rendered with a force so striking, in a style so monumental, that the *Canzoniere* may still be called the Introduction to the Book of Love. Thus, when Petrarch's own self was the object, his hand was steady; his art failed not in modelling the image into roundness.

Dante brought the universe into his poem. But 'the soul of man, too, is a universe:' and of this inner microcosm Petrarch was the poet. It remained for Boccaccio, the third in the triumvirate, to treat of common life with art no less developed. From Beatrice through Laura to La Fiammetta; from the Divine Comedy through the Canzoniere to the Decameron; from the world beyond the grave through the world of feeling to the world in which we play our puppet parts; from the mystic *terza rima*, through the stately lyric stanzas, to Protean prose—such was the rapid movement of Italian art within the brief space of some fifty years.

Giovanni Boccaccio was born in 1313, the eleventh year of Dante's exile, the first of Petrarch's residence

at Avignon. His grandfather belonged originally to Certaldo; but he removed to Florence and received the rights of burghership among those countryfolk whom Dante reckoned the corrupters of her ancient commonwealth[1]:

> Ma la cittadinanza, ch' è or mista
> Di Campi e di Certaldo e di Figghine,
> Pura vedeasi nell' ultimo artista.

Certaldo was a village of Valdelsa, famous for its onions. This explains the rebuff which the author of the Decameron received from a Florentine lady, whom he afterwards satirised in the *Corbaccio*: 'Go back to grub your onion-beds, and leave gentlewomen alone!' Boccaccio was neither born in wedlock nor yet of pure Italian blood. His mother was a Frenchwoman, with whom his father made acquaintance during a residence on business at Paris. These facts deserve to be noted, since they bear upon the temper of his mind and on the quality of his production.

It has been observed that the three main elements of Florentine society—the *popolo vecchio*, or nobles who acquiesced in the revolution of 1282; the *popolo grasso*, or burghers occupying a middle rank in the city, who passed the Ordinances of 1293; and the *popolo minuto*, or artisans and *contadini* admitted to the franchise, who came to the front between 1343 and 1378—are severally represented by Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio.[2] So rapid are the political and intellectual mutations in a little state like Florence, where the vigour of popular life and the vivacity of genius bear

[1] *Par.* xvi.

[2] Carducci, 'Dello Svolgimento della Letteratura Nazionale:' *Studi Letterari* (Livorno, 1874), p. 60.

no proportion to the size of the community, that within the short span of fifty years the centre of power may be transferred from an aristocracy to the proletariate, and the transition in art and literature from the Middle Age to the Renaissance may not only be accomplished but copiously illustrated in detail.[1]

Boccaccio was the typical Italian *bourgeois*, the representative of a class who finally determined the Renaissance. His prose and poetry contain in germ the various species which were perfected during that period. Studying him, we study in its immaturity the spirit of the next two centuries. He was the first to substitute a literature of the people for the literature of the learned classes and the aristocracy. He freed the natural instincts from ascetic interdictions and the mysticism of the transcendental school. He exposed the shams of chivalrous romance and the hypocrisies of monkery with ridicule more deadly than satire or invective. He brought realism in art and letters back to honour by delineating the world as he found it—sensual, base, comic, ludicrous, pathetic, tender, cruel—in all its crudities and contradictions. He replaced the abstractions of the allegory by concrete fact. He vindicated the claims of appetite and sensuous enjoyment against ideal aspirations and the scruples of a faith-tormented conscience. He taught his fellow-countrymen that a life of studious indifference was preferable to the strife of factions and the din of battle-fields.

Boccaccio did not act consciously and with fixed

[1] The *Divine Comedy* was probably begun in earnest about 1303, and the *Decameron* was published in 1353.

purpose to these ends. He was rather the spokesman of his age and race—the sign in literature that Italian society had entered upon a new phase, and that the old order was passing away. If the Decameron seemed to shake the basis of morality; if it gained the name of *Il Principe Galeotto* or the Pandar; if it was denounced as the corruptor of the multitude; this meant, not that its author had a sinister intention, but that the mediæval fabric was already sapped, and that the people whom Boccaccio wrote to please were disillusioned of their previous ideals. The honest easy-going man, Giovanni della Tranquillità, as he was called, painted what he saw and made himself the mouthpiece of the men around him.[1]

For the work he had to do, he was admirably fitted by nature and education. He combined the blood of a Florentine tradesman and a Parisian *grisette*. He had but little learning in his youth, and was the first great Italian writer who had not studied at Bologna. His early manhood was passed in commerce at Naples, where he gained access to the dissolute Court of Joan, and made love to her ladies. At his father's request he applied himself for a short while to legal

[1] Boccaccio was called Giovanni della Tranquillità partly in scorn. He resented it, as appears from a letter to Zanobi della Strada (*Op. Volg.* vol. xvii. p. 101), because it implied a love of Court delights and parasitical idleness. In that letter he amply defends himself from such imputations, showing that he led the life of a poor and contented student. Yet the nickname was true in a deeper sense, as is proved by the very arguments of his apology, and confirmed by the description of his life at Certaldo remote from civic duties (Letter to Pino de' Rossi, *ibid.* p. 35), as well as by the tragi-comic narrative of his discomfort at Naples (Letter to Messer Francesco, *ibid.* pp. 37–87). Not only in these passages, but in all his works he paints himself a comfort-loving *bourgeois*, whose heart was set on his books, whose ideal of enjoyment was a satisfied passion of a sensual kind.

studies; but he does not appear to have practised as a lawyer in real earnest. Literature very early became the passion, the one serious and ennobling enthusiasm of his life. We have already seen him at the tomb of Virgil, vowing to devote his powers to the sacred Muses; and we know what services he rendered to humanism by his indefatigable energy in the acquisition and diffusion of miscellaneous learning.[1] This is not the place to treat of Boccaccio's scholarship. Yet it may be said that, just as his philosophy of life was the philosophy of a jovial and sensuous plebeian, so his conception of literature lacked depth and greatness. He repeated current theories about the dependence of poetry on truth, the dignity of allegory, the sacredness of love, the beauty of honour. But his own work showed how little he had appropriated these ideas. As a student, a poet, and a man, he lived upon a lower plane of thought than Petrarch; and when he left the concrete for the abstract, his penetrative insight failed him.

From this point of view Boccaccio's Life of Dante is instructive. It is crammed with heterogeneous erudition. It bristles with citations and opinions learned by rote. It reveals the heartiest reverence for all things reckoned worthy in the realm of intellect. The admiration for the divine poet expressed in it is sincere and ungrudging. Yet this book betrays an astonishing want of sympathy with Dante, and transforms the sublime romance of the *Vita Nuova* into a commonplace *novella*. Dante told the world how he first felt love for Beatrice at

[1] See above, vol. ii. *Revival of Learning*, chap. ii. pp. 87–98.

the age of nine. His biographer is at a loss to understand this miracle. He supposes that the sweet season of May, the good wines and delicate dishes of the Portinari banquet, all the sensuous delights of a Florentine festival, combined to make the boy prematurely a man.[1] Dante called Beatrice 'youngest of the angels.' Boccaccio draws a lively picture of an angel in the flesh, as he imagined her; and in his portrait there is far less of the angelic than the carnal nature visible. This he does in perfect good faith, with the heartfelt desire to exalt Dante above all poets, and to spread abroad the truth of his illustrious life. But the hero of Renaissance literature was incapable of comprehending the real feeling of the man he worshipped. Between him and the enthusiasms of the middle ages a nine-fold Styx already poured its waves.

Boccaccio's noblest quality was the recognition of intellectual power. It was this cult of great men, if we may trust Filippo Villani, which first decided him to follow literature.[2] His devotion to the memory of Dante, and his frank confession of inferiority to Petrarch, whom he loved and served through twenty years of that exacting poet's life, are equally sincere and beautiful. These feelings inspired some of his finest poems, and penetrated the autobiographical passages of his minor works with a delicacy that endears the man to us.[3] No less candid was his

[1] Boccaccio, *Opere Volgari* (Firenze, 1833), vol. xv. p. 18.

[2] *Revival of Learning*, p. 88.

[3] I may specially refer to the passages of the *Amorosa Visione* (cap. v. vi.) where he meets with Dante, 'gloria delle muse mentre visse,' 'il maestro dal qual' io tengo ogni ben,' 'il Signor d' ogni savere;' also to

worship of beauty—not beauty of an intellectual or ideal order, but sensuous and real—the beauty which inspired the artists and the poets of the following centuries. Nor has any writer of any age been gifted with a stronger faculty for its expression. From this service of the beautiful he derived the major impulse of his activity as an artist. If he lacked moral greatness, if he was deficient in philosophical depth and religious earnestness, his devotion to art was serious, intense, profound, absorbing. He discharged his duties as a citizen with easy acquiescence, but no stern consciousness of patriotic purpose. He conformed to the Church, and allowed himself in old age to be frightened into a kind of half-repentance. But the homage he rendered to art was of a very different and more exacting nature. With his best energies he laboured to make himself, at least in this sphere, perfect. How amply he succeeded must be acknowledged by all men who have read the Decameron, and who have seen that here Boccaccio forms the legends of all ages and all lands into one harmonious whole, brings a world of many-sided human interest and varied beauty out of the chaos of medieval materials, finishing every detail with love, inspiring each particle with life, and setting the dædal picture of society in a framework of delicate romance. The conception and the execution of this masterpiece of literature are equally artistic. If the phrase 'art for art' can be used in speaking of one who was unconscious of

the sonnets on Dante, and that most beautiful sonnet addressed to Petrarch after death at peace in heaven with Cino and Dante. See the *Rime* (*Op. Volg.* vol. xvi.), sonnets 8, 60, 97, 108.

the theory it implies, Boccaccio may be selected as the typical artist for art's sake. Within the sphere of his craft, he is impassioned, enthusiastic, sincere, profound. His attitude with regard to all else is one of amused or curious indifference, of sensuous enjoyment, of genial ridicule, of playful cynicism.

Boccaccio was a *bourgeois* of the fourteenth century; but his character, as stamped on the Decameron, was common to Italy during the next two hundred years. The whole book glows with the joyousness of a race discarding dreams for realities, scorning the terrors of a byegone creed, revelling in nature's liberty, proclaiming the empire of the senses with a frankness which passes over into licence. In Boccaccio, the guiding genius of the Italian Renaissance arrives at consciousness. That blending of moral indifference with artistic seriousness, which we observe in him, marks the coming age. He is not the precursor but the inaugurator of the era. The smile which plays around his mouth became, though changeful in expression, fixed upon the lips of his posterity—genial in Ariosto, gracious in Poliziano, mischievous in Pulci, dubious in Lorenzo de' Medici, sardonic in Aretino, bitter in Folengo, toned to tragic irony in Machiavelli, impudent in Berni, joyous in Boiardo, sensual in Bandello—assuming every shade of character, Protean, indescribable, until at last it fades from Tasso's brow, when Italy has ceased to laugh except in secret.

The Decameron has been called the *Commedia Umana*.[1] This title is appropriate, not merely because the book portrays human life from a comic rather than

[1] De Sanctis, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, vol. i. cap. 9.

a serious point of view, but also because it is the direct antithesis of Dante's *Commedia Divina*. As poet and scene-painter devised for our ancestors of the Elizabethan period both Masque and Anti-masque, so did the genius of Italy provide two shows for modern Europe—the Masque and Anti-masque of human nature. Dante's Comedy represents our life in relation to the life beyond the grave. Boccaccio in his Comedy depicts the life of this earth only, subtracting whatsoever may suggest a life to come. It would be difficult to determine which of the two dramas is the more truthful, or which of the two poets had a firmer grasp upon reality. But the realities of the Divine Comedy are spiritual; those of the Human Comedy are material. The world of the Decameron is not an inverted world, like that of Aristophanes. It does not antithesise Dante's world by turning it upside down. It is simply the same world surveyed from an opposite point of view—unaltered, uninverted, but seen in the superficies, presented in the concrete. It is the prose of life; and this justifies the counterpoise of its form to that of Dante's poem. It is the world as world, the flesh as flesh, nature as nature, without intervention of spiritual agencies, without relation to ideal order, regarded as the sphere of humour, fortune, marvellous caprice. It is everything which the Church had banned, proscribed, held in abhorrence, without that which the Church had inculcated for the exaltation of the soul. This world, actual and unexplained, Boccaccio paints with the mastery of an accomplished artist, moulding its chaotic elements into a form of beauty which compels attention.

Dante condemned those 'who submit their reason to natural appetite.'[1] Boccaccio celebrates the apotheosis of natural appetite, of *il talento*, stigmatised as sin by ascetic Christianity.[2] His strongest sympathies are reserved for those who suffer by abandoning themselves to impulse, and in this self-abandonment he sees the poetry of life. This is the very core of the antithesis presented by the Human to the Divine Comedy. The Decameron is an undesigned revolt against the sum of medieval doctrine. Like all vehement reactions, it is not satisfied with opposing the extravagances of the view it combats. Instead of negativing asceticism, it affirms licence. Yet though the Divine Comedy and the Decameron are antithetical, they are both true, and true together, inasmuch as they present the same humanity studied under contradictory conditions. Human nature is vast enough to furnish the materials for both, inexplicable enough to render both acceptable to reason, tolerant enough to view with impartial approbation the desolate theology of the *Inferno* and the broad mirth of the Decameron.[3]

[1] 'Che la ragion sommettono al talento:' *Inferno* v. Compare these phrases:

Le genti dolorose
Che hanno perduto il ben dell' intelletto.
—*Inferno* iii.

And Semiramis:

Che libito fe lecito in sua legge.
—*Inferno* v.

[2] In all his earlier works, especially in the *Fiammetta*, the *Filostrato*, the *Ninfale Fiesolano*, the *Amorosa Visione*, he sings the hymn of *Il Talento*, triumphant over medieval discipline. They form the proper prelude to what is sometimes called the Paganism of the Renaissance, but what is really a resurgence of the natural man. It was this *talento* which Valla philosophised, and Beccadelli and Pontano sang.

[3] One instance will suffice to illustrate the different methods of

The Decameron did not appear unheralded by similar attempts. No literary taste was stronger in the middle ages than the taste for stories. This is proved by the collection known as *Gesta Romanorum*, and by the *Bestiarii*, *Lapidarii*, *Physiologi* and *Apiarii*, which contain a variety of tales, many of them surprisingly indecent, veiling spiritual doctrine under obscenities which horrify a modern reader.[1] From the hands of ecclesiastical compilers these short stories passed down to popular narrators, who in France made the *fabliaux* a special branch of vulgar literature. The follies and vices of the clergy, tricks practised by wives upon their husbands, romantic adventures of lovers, and comic incidents of daily life, formed the staple of their stock in trade. When the *fabliau* reached Italy, together with other literary wares, from France, it was largely cultivated in the South; and the first known collection of Italian stories received the name of *Il Novellino*, or *Il Fiore del parlar gentile*. The language of this book was immature, and the tales themselves seem rather memoranda for the narrator than finished compositions to be read with pleasure.[2] It may therefore be admitted that the rude

Boccaccio and Dante in dealing with the same material. We all know in what murk and filth Dante beheld Ciacco, the glutton, and what torments awaited Filippo Argenti, the *fiorentino spirito bizzarro*, upon the marsh of Styx (*Inferno* vi. and viii.). These persons play the chief parts in Giorn. ix. nov. 8, of the *Decameron*. They are still the spendthrift parasite, and the brutally capricious bully. But while Dante points the sternest moral by their examples, Boccaccio makes their vices serve his end of comic humour. The inexorableness of Dante is nowhere more dreadful than in the eighth Canto of the *Inferno*. The levity of Boccaccio is nowhere more superficial than in that Novella.

[1] See the little work, full of critical learning, by Adolfo Bartoli, *I Precursori del Boccaccio*, Firenze, Sansoni.

[2] See *Le Novelle Antiche* (another name for *Il Novellino*), per cura di

form of the Decameron was given to Boccaccio. Not to mention the larger chivalrous romances, *Conti di antichi Cavalieri*, and translations from French *Chansons de Geste*, which have no genuine link of connection with the special type of the Novella, he found models for his tales both in the libraries of medieval convents and upon the lips of popular *raccontatori*. Yet this must not be taken to imply any lack of originality in Boccaccio. Such comparisons as Professor Bartoli has instituted between the Decameron and some of its supposed sources, prove the insignificance of his debt, the immeasurable inferiority of his predecessors.[1]

The spirit of the Decameron, no less than the form, had been long in preparation. Satire, whether superficial, as in the lays of the *jongleurs*, or searching, as in the invectives of Dante and Petrarch, was familiar to the middle ages; and the popular Latin poems of the wandering students are steeped in rage against a corrupt hierarchy, a venal Curia.[2] Those same *Car-*

Guido Biagi, Firenze, Sansoni, 1880. It is a curious agglomeration of anecdotes drawn from the history of the Suabian princes, Roman sources, the Arthurian legends, the Bible, Oriental apologues, fables, and a few ancient myths. That of *Narcis*, p. 66, is very prettily told. Only one tale is decidedly cynical. We find in the book selections made from the *débris* of a vast and various medieval library. French influence is frequently perceptible in the style.

[1] *Precursori del Boccaccio*, p. 57 to end.

[2] See *Carmina Burana* (Stuttgart, 1847), pp. 1–112; *Poems of Walter Mapes*, by Thomas Wright (for Camden Society, 1841), pp. 1–257, for examples of these satiric poems. The *Propter Syon non tacebo, Flete Sion filiæ, Utar contra vitia*, should be specially noticed. Many other curious satires, notably one against marriage and the female sex, can also be found in Du Méril's three great collections, *Poésies Populaires Latines antérieures au douzième Siècle*, *Poésies Populaires Latines du Moyen Age*, and *Poésies Inédites du Moyen Age*, Paris, 1843–1847. Those to whom these works are not accessible, may find an excellent selection of the serious and jocular popular Latin medieval poetry in a little volume *Gaudeamus! Carmina Vagorum selecta*, Lipsiæ, Teubner,

mina Vagorum reveal the smouldering embers of unextinguished Paganism, which underlay the Christian culture of the middle ages. Written by men who belonged to the clerical classes, but who were often on bad terms with ecclesiastical authorities, tinctured with the haughty contempt of learning for the laity, yet overflowing with the vigorous life of the proletariate, these extraordinary poems bring to view a bold and candid sensuality, an ineradicable spontaneity of natural appetite, which is strangely at variance with the cardinal conceptions of ascetic Christianity.[1] In the sect of the Italian Epicureans; in the obscure bands of the Cathari and Paterini; in the joyous companies of

1877. The question of their authorship has been fairly well discussed by Hubatsch, *Die lateinischen Vagantenlieder*, Görlitz, 1870.

[1] The erotic and drinking songs of the Vagi deserve to be carefully studied by all who wish to understand the germs of the Renaissance in the middle ages. They express a simple naturalism, not of necessity Pagan, though much is borrowed from the language of classical mythology. I would call attention in particular to *Æstuans interius*, *Omittamus studia*, *O admirabile Veneris idolum*, *Ludo cum Cæcilia*, *Si puer cum puellula*, and four *Pastoralia*, all of which may be found in the little book *Gaudeamns* cited above. In spontaneity and truth of feeling they correspond to the Latin hymns. But their spirit is the exact antithesis of that which produced the *Dies Iræ* and the *Stabat Mater*. The absence of erudition and classical imitation separates them from the poems of Beccadelli, Pontano, Poliziano, or Bembo. They present the natural material of neo-pagan Latin verse without its imitative form. It is youth rejoicing in its strength and lustihood, enjoying the delights of spring, laughing at death, taking the pleasures of the moment, deriding the *rumores senum severiorum*, unmasking hypocrisy in high places, at wanton war with constituted social shams. These songs were written by wandering students of all nations, who traversed Germany, France, Italy, Spain, England, seeking special knowledge at the great centres of learning, following love-adventures, poor and careless, coldly greeted by the feudal nobility and the clergy, attached to the people by their habits but separated from them by their science. In point of faith these poets are orthodox. There is no questioning of ecclesiastical dogma, no anticipation of Luther, in their verses. This blending of theological conformity with satire on the Church and moral laxity is eminently characteristic of the Renaissance in Italy.

Provençal Court and castle, the same note of irrepressible nature sounded. Side by side with the new-built fabric of ecclesiastical idealism, the old temples of unregenerate human deities subsisted. They were indeed discredited, proscribed, consigned to shame. They formed the *mauvais lieux* of Christendom. Yet there they stood, even as the Venusberg of Tannhäuser's legend abode unshaken though cathedrals rose by Rhine. All that was needed to restore the worship of these nature-gods was that a great artist should decorate their still substantial temple-walls with the beauty of a new, sincere, and unrepentant style, fitting their abandoned chambers for the habitation of the human spirit, free now to choose the dwelling that it listed. This Boccaccio achieved. And here it must again be noticed that the revolution of time was about to bring man's popular and carnal deities once more, if only for a season, to the throne. The murmured songs of a few wandering students were about to be drowned in the pæan of Renaissance poetry. The visions of the Venusberg were to be realised in Italian painting. The coming age was destined to live out Boccaccio's Human Comedy in act and deed. This is the true kernel of his greatness. As poet, he ranked third only, and that at a vast interval, in the triumvirate of the fourteenth century. But the temper of his mind, the sphere of his conceptions, made him the representative genius of the two following centuries. Awaiting the age when science should once more co-ordinate the forces of humanity in a coherent theory, men in the Renaissance exchanged superfluous restraint for immoderate licence. It is not to be

wondered at that Boccaccio and not Dante was their hero.

The description of the Plague at Florence which introduces the Decameron, has more than a merely artistic appropriateness. Boccaccio may indeed have meant to bring his group of pleasure-seeking men and maidens into strong relief by contrast with the horrors of the stricken city. Florence crowded with corpses, echoing to the shrieks of delirium and the hoarse cries of body-buriers, is the background he has chosen for that blooming garden, where the birds sing and the lovers sit by fountains in the shade, laughing or weeping as the spirit of each tale compels them. But independently of this effect of contrast, which might be used to illustrate the author's life-philosophy, the description of the Plague has a still deeper significance, whereof Boccaccio never dreamed. Matteo Villani dates a progressive deterioration of manners in the city from the Plague of 1348, and justifies us in connecting the Ciompi riots of 1378 with the enfeeblement of civic order during those thirty years. The Plague was, therefore, the outward sign, if not the efficient cause, of those very ethical and social changes which the Decameron immortalised in literature. It was the historical landmark between two ages, dividing the Florence of the Grandi from the Florence of the Ciompi. The cynicism, liberated in that time of terror, lawlessness, and sudden death, assumed in Boccaccio's romance a beautiful and graceful aspect. It lost its harsh and vulgar outlines, and took the air of genial indulgence which distinguished Italian society throughout the years of the Renaissance.

Boccaccio selects seven ladies of ages varying from eighteen to twenty-eight, and three men, the youngest of whom is twenty-five. Having formed this company, he transports them to a villa two miles from the city, where he provides them with a train of serving-men and waiting-women, and surrounds them with the delicacies of medieval luxury. He is careful to remind us that, though the three men and three of the ladies were acknowledged lovers, and though their conversation turned on almost nothing else but passion, 'no stain defiled the honour of the party.' Stories are told; and these unblemished maidens listen with laughter and a passing blush to words and things which outrage Northern sense of decency. The remorseless but light satire of the Decameron spares none of the ideals of the age. All the medieval enthusiasms are reviewed and criticised from the standpoint of the Florentine *bottega* and *piazza*. It is as though the *bourgeois*, not content with having made nobility a crime, were bent upon extinguishing its spirit. The tale of Agilulf vulgarises the chivalrous conception of love ennobling men of low estate, by showing how a groom, whose heart is set upon a queen, avails himself of opportunity. Tancredi burlesques the knightly reverence for a stainless scutcheon by the extravagance of his revenge. The sanctity of the Thebaid, that ascetic dream of purity and self-renunciation for God's service, is made ridiculous by Alibech. Ser Ciappelletto brings contempt upon the canonisation of saints. The confessional, the worship of reliques, the priesthood, and the monastic orders, are derided with the deadliest persiflage. Christ him-

self is scoffed at in a jest which points the most indecent of these tales.[1] Marriage affords a never-failing theme for scorn; and when, by way of contrast, the novelist paints an ideal wife, he runs into such hyperboles that the very patience of Griselda is a satire on its dignity. Like Balzac, Boccaccio was unsuccessful in depicting virtuous womanhood. Attempting this, he fell, like Balzac, into the absurdities of sentiment. His own conception of love was sensual and voluptuous—not uniformly coarse, nay often tender, but frankly carnal. Without having recourse to the Decameron, this statement might be abundantly substantiated by reference to the *Filostrato*, *Fiammetta*, *Amorosa Visione*, *Ninfale Fiesolano*. Boccaccio enjoyed the painting of licentious pleasures, snatched in secret, sometimes half by force, by a lover after moderate resistance from his paramour. He imported into these pictures the plebeian tone which we have already noticed in the popular poetry of the preceding century, and which was destined to pervade the erotic literature of the Renaissance. There is, therefore, an ironical contrast between the decencies observed by his *brigata* and their conversation; a contrast rooted in the survival from chivalrous times of conventional ideals, which have lost reality and been persistently ignored in practice. This effect of irony is enhanced by the fact that many of the motives are such as might have been romantically treated, but here are handled from the *popolano grasso's* point of view. A sceptical and sensuous imagination plays around the

[1] See the last sentence of Giorn. iii. Nov. 1.

sanctities and sublimities which have for it become illusory.

We observe the same kind of unconscious hypocrisy, the same spontaneous sapping of now obsolete ideals, in the *Amorosa Visione*.[1] Here Love is still regarded as the apotheosis of mortal experience. It is still said to be the union of intelligence and moral energy in an enthusiasm of the soul. Yet the joys of love revealed at the conclusion of the poem are such as a *bayadère* might offer.[2] The *bourgeois* effaces the knight; the Italian of the Renaissance has broken the leading strings of mystical romance. This vision, composed in *terza rima*, was assuredly not meant to travesty Dante. Still it would be difficult to imagine a more complete inversion of the Dantesque point of view, a more deliberate substitution of an Earthly Paradise for the Paradiso of the Divine Comedy. It is as though Boccaccio, the representative of the new age, in all the fulness of his sensuous *naïveté*, appealed to the poets of chivalry, and said: 'See here how all your fancies find their end in nature!'

It will not do to over-strain the censure implied in the foregoing paragraphs. Natural appetite, no less than the ideal, has its elements of poetry; and the sensuality of the Decameron accords with plastic beauty in a work of art incomparably lucid. Shelley, no lenient critic, wrote these words about the setting of the tales[3]: 'What descriptions of nature are those in his little introductions to every new day! It is the morning of life stripped of that mist of familiarity

[1] *Op. Volg.* vol. xiv. [2] Cap. xlix.
[3] Letter to Leigh Hunt, September 8, 1819.

which makes it obscure to us.' Boccaccio's sense of beauty has already been alluded to; and it so pervades his work that special attention need scarcely be called to it. His prose abounds in passages which are perfect pictures after their own kind, like the following selected, not from the Decameron, but from an earlier work, entitled *Filocopo*[1]:

Con gli orecchi intenti al suono, cominciò ad andare in quella parte ove il sentiva; e giunto presso alla fontana, vide le due giovinette. Elle erano nel viso bianchissime, la quale bianchezza quanto si conveniva di rosso colore era mescolata. I loro occhi pareano mattutine stelle, e le picciole bocche di colore di vermiglia rosa, più piacevoli diveniano nel muoverle alle note della loro canzone. I loro capelli come fila d'oro erano biondissimi, i quali alquanto crespi s'avvolgevano infra le verdi frondi delle loro ghirlande. Vestite per lo gran caldo, come è detto sopra, le tenere e dilicate carni di sottilissimi vestimenti, i quali dalla cintura in su strettissimi mostravano la forma delle belle mamme, le quali come due ritondi pomi pignevano in fuori il resistente vestimento, e ancora in più luoghi per leggiadre apriture si manifestavano le candide carni. La loro statura era di convenevole grandezza, in ciascun membro bene proporzionata.

Space and nineteenth-century canons of propriety prevent me from completing the picture made by Florio and these maidens. It might be paralleled

[1] *Op. Volg.* vol. vii. p. 230. I am loth to attempt a translation of this passage, which owes its charm to the melody and rhythm of chosen words:—

'With ears intent upon the music, he began to go in the direction whence he heard it; and when he drew nigh to the fountain, he beheld the two maidens. They were of countenance exceeding white, and this whiteness was blent in seemly wise with ruddy hues. Their eyes seemed to be stars of morning, and their little mouths, of the colour of a vermeil rose, became of pleasanter aspect as they moved them to the music of their song. Their tresses, like threads of gold, were very fair, and slightly curled went wandering through the green leaves of their garlands. By reason of the great heat their tender and delicate limbs, as hath been said above, were clad in robes of the thinnest texture, the which, made very tight above the waist, revealed the form of their fair bosoms, which like two round apples pushed the opposing raiment outward, and therewith in divers places the white flesh appeared through graceful openings. Their stature was of fitting size, and each limb well-proportioned.'

with a hundred passages of like intention, where the Italian artist is revealed to us by touches curiously multiplied.[1] We find in them the sense of colour, the scrupulous precision of form, and something of that superfluous minuteness which belongs to painting rather than to literature. The writer has seen a picture, and not felt a poem. In rendering it by words, he trusted to the imagination of his reader for suggesting a highly-finished work of plastic art to the mind.[2] The *fêtes champêtres* of the Venetian masters are here anticipated in the prose of the *trecento*. Such descriptions were frequent in Italian literature, especially frequent in the works of the best stylists, Sannazzaro, Poliziano, Ariosto, the last of whom has been severely but not unjustly criticised by Lessing for overstepping the limits of poetry in his portrait of Alcina. It may be pleaded in defence of Boccaccio and his followers that they belonged to a nation dedicated to the figurative arts, and that they wrote for a public familiar with painted form. Their detailed descriptions were at once translated into colour by men habituated to the sight of pictures. During the Renaissance, painting dominated the Italian genius, and all the sister arts of expression felt that influence,

[1] The description of the nymph Lia in the *Ameto* (*Op. Volg.* xv. 30-33) carries Boccaccio's manner into tedious prolixity.

[2] Boccaccio was a great painter of female beauty and idyllic landscape; but he had not the pictorial faculty in a wider sense. The frescoes of the *Amorosa Visione*, when compared with Poliziano's descriptions in *La Giostra*, are but meagre notes of form. Possibly the progress of the arts from Giotto to Benozzo Gozzoli and Botticelli may explain this picturesque inferiority of the elder poet; but in reading Boccaccio we feel that the defect lay not so much in his artistic faculty as in the limitation of his sympathy to certain kinds of beauty.

just as at Athens sculpture lent something even to the drama.

As a poet, Boccaccio tried many styles. His epic, the *Teseide*, cannot be reckoned a great success. He was not at home upon the battle-field, and knew not how to sound the heroic trumpet.[1] Yet the credit of discovery may be awarded to the author of this poem. He introduced to the modern world a tale rich in romantic incidents and capable of still higher treatment than he was himself able to give it. When we remember how Chaucer, Shakspere, Fletcher and Dryden handled and rehandled the episode of Palamon's rivalry with Arcite for the hand of Emilia, we dare not withhold from Boccaccio the praise which belongs to creative genius.[2] It is no slight achieve-

[1] Dante (*De Vulg. Eloq.* ii. 2) observed that while there were three subjects of great poetry—War, Love, Morality—no modern had chosen the first of these themes. Boccaccio in the last Canto of the *Teseide* seems to allude to this :

Poichè le muse nude cominciaro
Nel cospetto degli uomini ad andare,
Già fur di quelli che le esercitaro
Con bello stile *in onesto parlare*,
Ed altri in *amoroso* le operaro ;
Ma tu, o libro, primo a lor cantare
Di Marte fai gli affanni sostenuti,
Nel volgar Lazio mai più non veduti.

[2] How far Boccaccio actually created the tale can be questioned. In the dedication to Fiammetta (*Op. Volg.* ix. 3), he says he found a very ancient version of his story, and translated it into rhyme and the *latino volgare* for the first time. Again, in the exordium to the first Book (*ib.* p. 10), he calls it:

una storia antica
Tanto negli anni riposta e nascosa
Che latino autor non par ne dica
Per quel ch' i' senta in libro alcuna cosa.

We might perhaps conjecture that he had discovered the legend in a Byzantine MS.

ment to have made a story which bore such noble fruit in literature. The *Teseide*, moreover, fulfilled an important mission in Italian poetry. It adapted the popular *ottava rima* to the style of the romantic epic, and fixed it for Pulci, Poliziano, Boiardo, and Ariosto. That Boccaccio was not the inventor of the stanza, as used to be assumed, may now be considered beyond all question. That he had not learned to handle it with the majestic sweetness of Poliziano, or the infinite variety of Ariosto, is evident. Yet he deserves credit for having discerned its capacity and brought it into cultivated use.

Though unequal in quality, his sonnets and *ballate*, whether separately published or scattered through his numerous prose works, have a higher merit. The best are those in which, following Guido Cavalcanti's path, he gives free scope to his incomparable sense of natural beauty. The style is steeped in sweetness, softness and the delicacy of music. From these half-popular poems I might select the Ballata *Io mi son giovinetta;* the song of the Angel from the planet Venus, extracted from the *Filocopo;* a lament of a woman for her lost youth, *Il fior che 'l valor perde;* and the girl's prayer to Love, *Tu se' nostro Signor caro e verace.*[1] It is difficult for the critic to characterise poems so true to simple nature, so spontaneously passionate, and yet so artful in the turns of language, moulded like wax beneath the poet's touch. Here sensuousness has no vulgarity, and the seductions of the flesh are sublimed by feeling to a beauty which is spiritual in refinement. It may be observed that Boccaccio writes

[1] Carducci, 'Cantilene etc.,' *Op. cit.* pp. 168, 170, 171, 173.

his best love-poetry to be sung by girls. He has abandoned the standpoint of the chivalrous lover, though he still uses the phraseology of the Italo-Provençal school. What arrests his fancy is, not the ideal of womanhood raising man above himself, but woman conscious of her own supreme attractiveness. He delights in making her the mirror of the feelings she inspires. He bids her celebrate in hymns the beauty of her sex, the perfume of the charms that master man. When the metaphysical forms of speech, borrowed from the elder style, are used, they give utterance to a passion which is sensual, or blent at best with tenderness—a physical love-longing, a sentiment born of youth and desire. A girl, for instance, speaks about herself, and says:[1]

Colui che muove il cielo et ogni stella
Mi fece a suo diletto
Vaga leggiadra graziosa e bella,
Per dar qua giù ad ogni alto intelletto
Alcun segno di quella
Biltà che sempre a lui sta nel cospetto.

On the lips of him who wrote the tale of Alibech, this language savours of profanity. Yet we are forced to recognise the poet's sincerity of feeling. It is the same problem as that which meets us in the *Amorosa Visione*.[2] The god Boccaccio worshipped was changed; but this deity was still divine, and deserved, he thought, the honours of mystic adoration. At the same time there is nothing Asiatic in his sensuous inspiration. The emotion is controlled and concentrated; the form is pure in all its outlines.

The Decameron was the masterpiece of Boccaccio's

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 160. [2] See above, p. 114.

maturity. But he did not reach that height of excellence without numerous essays in styles of much diversity. While still a young man, not long after his meeting with Fiammetta, he began the *Filocopo* and dedicated it to his new love.[1] This romance was based upon the earlier tale of *Floire et Blanceflor*.[2] But the youthful poet invested the simple love-story of his Florio and Biancofiore with a masquerade costume of mythological erudition and wordy rhetoric, which removed it from the middle ages. The gods and goddesses of Olympus are introduced as living agents, supplying the machinery of the romance until the very end, when the hero and heroine are converted to Christianity, and abjure their old protectors with cold equanimity. We are left to imagine that, for Boccaccio at any rate, Venus, Mars and Cupid were as real as Christ and the saints, though superseded as objects of pious veneration. This confusion of Pagan and Christian mythology is increased by his habit of finding classical periphrases for the expression of religious ideas. He calls nuns *Sacerdotesse di Diana*. God the Father is *Quell' eccelso e inestimabile principe Sommo Giove*. Satan becomes Pluto, and human sin is Atropos. The birth of Christ is described thus: *la terra come sentì il nuovo incarco della deità del*

[1] This appears from the conclusion (*Op. Volg.* viii. 376). Fiammetta was the natural daughter of Petrarch's friend and patron, King Robert. Boccaccio first saw her in the church of S. Lawrence at Naples, April 7, 1341.

[2] The history of this widely popular medieval romance has been traced by Du Méril in his edition of the thirteenth-century French version (Paris, 1856). He is of opinion that Boccaccio may have derived it from some Byzantine source. But this seems hardly probable, since Boccaccio gained his knowledge of Greek later in life. Certain indications in the *Filocopo* point to a Spanish original.

figliuol di Giove. The Apostles appear as *nuovi cavalieri entrati contro a Plutone in campo.*[1] The style of the *Filocopo* was new; and in spite, or perhaps because of, its euphuism, it had a decided success. This encouraged Boccaccio to attempt the *Teseide.* The *Filostrato* soon followed; and here for the first time we find the future author of the Decameron. Under Greek names and incidents borrowed from the War of Troy, we are in fact studying some episode from the *chroniques galantes* of the Neapolitan Court, narrated with the vigour of a perfect master in the art of story telling. Nothing could be further removed in sentiment from the heroism of the Homeric age or closer to the customs of a corrupt Italian city than this poem. In Troilo himself a feverish type of character, overmastered by passion which is rather a delirium of the senses than a mood of feeling, has been painted with a force that reminds us of the *Fiammetta,* where the same disease of the soul is delineated in a woman. Pandaro shows for the first time in modern literature an utterly depraved nature, revelling in seduction, and glutting a licentious imagination with the spectacle of satiated lust. The frenzied appetite of Troilo, Pandaro's ruffian arts, and the gradual yieldings of Griselda to a voluptuous inclination, reveal the master's hand; and though the poem is hurried toward the close (Boccaccio being only interested in the portrayal of his hero's love-languors, ecstasies and disappointment), the *Filostrato* must

[1] See *Op. Volg.* vii. 6-11. Compare with these phrases those selected from the humanistic writings of a later date, *Revival of Learning,* p. 397.

undoubtedly be reckoned the finest of his narratives in verse. The second and third Cantos are remarkable for dramatic movement and wealth of sensuous imagination, never rising to sublimity nor refined with such poetry as Shakspere found for Romeo and Juliet, but welling copiously from a genuinely ardent nature. The love described is nakedly and unaffectedly luxurious; it is an overmastering impulse, crowned at last with all the joys of sensual fruition. According to Boccaccio the repose conferred by Love upon his votaries is the satiety of their desires.[1] Between Dante's *Signore della nobilitade* and his *Sir di tutta pace* there is indeed a wide gulf fixed.[2]

After the *Filostrato*, Boccaccio next produced the

[1] This is the climax (Parte Terza, stanza xxxii.):

A cui Troilo disse; anima mia,
I' te ne prego, sì ch' io t' abbia in braccio
Ignuda sì come il mio cor disia.
Ed ella allora: ve' che me ne spaccio;
E la camicia sua gittata via,
Nelle sue braccia si raccolse avvaccio;
E stringnendo l' un l' altro con fervore,
D' amor sentiron l' ultimo valore.

[2] The *Amorosa Visione* ends with these words, *Sir di tutta pace*; their meaning is explained in previous passages of the same poem. At the end of Cap. xlvi. the lady says:

Io volli ora al presente far quieto
Il tuo disio con amorosa pace,
Dandoti l' arra che finirà il fleto.

Again in cap. l we read:

E quel disio che or più ti tormenta
Porrò in pace, con quella bellezza
Che l' alma al cor tuttora ti presenta.

The context reveals the nature of the peace to be attained. It is the satisfaction of an orgasm. We may compare the invocation to Venus and her promise at the end of the *Caccia di Diana*, canto xvii. (*Op. Volg.* xiv.). The time-honoured language about 'expelling all base thoughts' is here combined with the anticipation of sensual possession.

Ameto, *Amorosa Visione*, *Fiammetta*, *Ninfale Fiesolano*, and *Corbaccio*, between the years 1343 and 1355. The *Ameto* is a tissue of pastoral tales, descriptions, and versified interludes, prolix in style and affected with pedantic erudition. To read it attentively is now almost impossible, in spite of frequent passages where the luxuriant word-painting of the author is conspicuous. In the *Amorosa Visione* he attempted the style which Petrarch had adopted for his *Trionfi*. After reviewing human life under the several aspects of learning, glory, love, fortune, the poet finally resigns himself to a Nirvana of sensual beatitude. The poem is unsuccessful, because it adapts an obsolete form of art to requirements beyond its scope. Boccaccio tries to pour the new wine of the Renaissance into the old bottles of medieval allegory. In the *Fiammetta* Boccaccio exhibited all his strength as an anatomist of feeling, describing the effects of passion in a woman's heart, and analysing its varying emotions with a subtlety which proved his knowledge of a certain type of female character. It is the first attempt in modern literature to portray subjective emotion exterior to the writer. Since Virgil's Dido, or the *Heroidum Epistolæ* of Ovid, nothing of the sort had been essayed upon an equal scale. Taken together with Dante's *Vita Nuova* and Petrarch's *Secretum*, each of which is a personal confidence, the *Fiammetta* may be reckoned among those masterpieces of analytic art, which revealed the developed consciousness of the Italian race, at a moment when the science of emotion was still for the rest of Europe an undiscovered territory. This essay exercised a wide and lasting influence

over the descriptive literature of the Renaissance. Yet when we compare its stationary monologues with the brief but pregnant touches of the Decameron, we are forced to assign it the rank of a study rather than a finished picture. The *Fiammetta* is to the Decameron what rhetoric is to the drama. This, however, is hardly a deduction from its merit. The delineation of an unholy and unhappy passion, blessed with fruition for one brief moment, cursed through months of illness and despair with all the furies of vain desire and poignant recollection, is executed with incomparable fulness of detail and inexhaustible richness of fancy. The reader rises from a perusal of the *Fiammetta* with impressions similar to those which a work of Richardson leaves upon the mind. At the same time it is full of poetry. The Vision of Venus, the invocation to Sleep, and the description of summer on the Bay of Baiæ relieve a deliberate anatomy of passion, which might otherwise be tedious.[1] The romance is so rich in material that it furnished the motives for a score of tales, and the novelists of the Renaissance availed themselves freely of its copious stores.[2]

The *Corbaccio* or *Laberinto d'Amore* is a satire upon women, animated with the bitterest sense of injury and teeming with vindictive spite. It was written with the avowed purpose of reviling a lady who had rejected Boccaccio's advances, and it paints the whole sex in the darkest colours. We could fancy that certain passages had been penned by a

[1] *Op Volg.* vi. 21, 89, 91.

[2] Bonucci in his edition of Alberti's works, conscious of that author's debt to Boccaccio, advances the wild theory that he wrote the *Fiammetta*. See *Opere Volgari di L. B. Alberti*, vol. iii. p. 353.

disappointed monk. Though this work is in tone unworthy of its author, it bore fruits in the literature of the next century. Alberti's satires are but rhetorical amplifications of themes suggested by the *Corbaccio.* Nor is it without value for the student of Italian manners. The list of romances read by women in the fourteenth century throws light upon Francesca's episode in Dante, and proves that the title *Principe Galeotto* was not given without precedent to Boccaccio's own writings.[1] The discourse on gentle birth in the same treatise should be studied in illustration of the Florentine conception of nobility.[2] Boccaccio, though he follows so closely in time upon Dante, already anticipates the democratic theories of Poggio.[3] Feudal feeling was extinct in the *bourgeoisie* of the great towns; nor had the experience of the Neapolitan Court suppressed in Boccaccio's mind the pride of a Florentine citizen. At the same time he felt that contempt of the literary classes for the common folk which was destined in the next century to divide the nation and to check the development of its vulgar literature. He apologises for explaining Dante, and for bringing poetry down to the level of the *feccia plebeia*, the *vulgo indegno*, the *ingrati meccanici*, and so forth.[4]

It remains to speak of yet another of Boccaccio's minor works, the *Ninfale Fiesolano.* This is a tale in octave stanzas, which, under a veil of mythological romance, relates the loves of a young man and a nun, and their subsequent tragic ending. It owes its

[1] *Laberinto d' Amore* (Firenze, Caselli), p. 153, and p. 127.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 174.
[3] See *Age of the Despots*, p. 170, note.
[4] See Sonnets vii. and viii. of the *Rime.*

interest to the vivid picture of seduction, so glowingly painted as to betray the author's personal enjoyment of the motive. The story is thrown back into a time antecedent to Christianity and civil life. The heroine, Mensola, is a nymph of Diana; the hero, Affrico, a shepherd. The scene is laid among the mountains above Florence; and when Mensola has been changed into a fountain by the virgin goddess, whose rites she violated, the poem concludes with a myth invented to explain the founding of Fiesole. Civil society succeeds to the savagery of the woodland, and love is treated as the vestibule to culture.[1] The romantic and legendary portions of this tale are ill-connected. The versification is lax; and except in the long episode of Mensola's seduction, which might have formed a passage of contemporary novel-writing, the genius of Boccaccio shines with clouded lustre.[2] Yet the *Ninfale Fiesolano* occupies a not unimportant place in the history of Italian literature. It adapts the pastoral form to that ideal of civility dependent upon culture, which took so strong a hold upon the imagination of the *cinque cento*. Its stanzas are a forecast of the *Arcadia* and the *Orfeo*.

In the minor poems and romances, which have here been passed in review, except perhaps in the *Fiammetta*, Boccaccio cannot be said to take a place

[1] The same motive occurs in the *Ameto*, where the power of love to refine a rustic nature is treated both in the prose romance and in the interpolated *terza rima* poems. See especially the song of Teogapen (*Op. Volg.* xv. 34).

[2] Boccaccio breaks the style and becomes obscenely vulgar at times. See Parte Quarta, xxxvi. xxxvii., Parte Quinta, xlv. xlvi. The inuendoes of the *Ugellino* and the *Nicchio* are here repeated in figures which anticipate the novels and *capitoli* of the *cinque cento*.

among European writers of the first rank. His style is prolix; his versification, if we omit the *Canzoni a Ballo* and some sonnets, is slovenly; nor does he show exceptional ability in the conception and conduct of his stories. He is strongest when he paints a violent passion or describes voluptuous sensations, weakest when he attempts allegory or assumes the airs of a philosopher. We feel, in reading these productions of his earlier manhood, that nearly all were what the Germans call *Gelegenheits-gedichte.* The private key is lost to some of these works, which were intended for the ears of one among the multitude. On others it is plainly written that they were the outpourings of a personal desire, the self-indulgence of a fancy which revelled in imagined sensuality, using literature as the safety-valve for subjective longings. They lack the calm of perfect art, the full light falling on the object from without, which marks a poem of the highest order. From these romances of his youth, no less than from the Latin treatises of his maturity, we return to the Decameron when we seek to place Boccaccio among the classics. Nothing comparable with this Human Comedy for universal interest had appeared in modern Europe, if we except the Divine Comedy; and it may be questioned whether any work of equal scope was given to the world before the theatre of Shakspere and the comedies of Molière. Boccaccio, though he paints the surface of life, paints it in a way to suggest the inner springs of character, and to bring the motives of action vividly before us. *Quicquid agunt homines* is the matter of his book. The recoil from medieval principles of conduct, which gives it a certain air of

belonging to a moment rather than all time, was necessary in the evolution of intellectual freedom. In this respect, again, it faithfully reflected the Florentine temperament. At no epoch have the Italians been sternly and austerely pious. Piety with them is a passionate impulse rather than a deeply-reasoned habit based upon conviction. Their true nature is critical, susceptible to beauty, quick at seizing the ridiculous and exposing shams, suspicious of mysticism, realistic, pleasure-loving, practical. These qualities, special to the Florentines, but shared in large measure by the nation, found artistic expression in the Decameron, and asserted their supremacy in the literature of the Renaissance. That a sublime ideal, unapprehended by Boccaccio, and destined to remain unrepresented in the future, should have been conceived by Dante; that Petrarch should have modulated by his masterpiece of poetic workmanship from the key of the Divine Comedy to that of the Decameron; that one city should have produced three such men, and that one half-century should have witnessed their successive triumphs, forms the great glory of Florence, and is one of the most notable facts in the history of genius.

It remains to speak about Boccaccio's prose, and the relation of his style to that of other *trecentisti*. If we seek the origins of Italian prose, we find them first in the Franco-Italian romances of the Lombard period, which underwent the process of *toscaneggiamento* at Florence, next in books of morality and devotion, and also in the earlier chronicles. Among the Tuscanised tales of chivalry belonging to the first age of Italian literature are the *Conti di antichi cavalieri*

and the *Tavola Ritonda*, both of which bear traces of translation from Provençal sources.[1] The *Novellino*, of which mention has already been made, betrays the same origin. The style of these works offers a pretty close parallel to the English of Sir Thomas Mallory. At the same time that the literature of France was assuming an Italian garb, many versions of Roman classics appeared. Orosius, Vegetius, Sallust, with parts of Cicero, Livy and Boethius were adapted to popular reading. But the taste of the time, as we have already seen in the preceding chapter, inclined the authors of these works to make selections with a view to moral edification. Their object was, not to present the ancients in a modern garb, but to cull notable examples of conduct and ethical sentences from the works that found most favour with the mediæval intellect. Passing under the general titles of *Fiori, Giardini, Tesori* and *Conviti—Fiori di filosofi e molto savi, Giardino di Consolazione, Fiore di Rettorica, Fiore del parlar gentile*—these collections supplied the laity with extracts from Latin authors, and extended culture to the people. The *Libro di Cato* might be chosen as a fair example of their scope.[2] The number of such books, ascribed to Bono Giamboni, Brunetto Latini, and Guidotto of Bologna, proves that an extensive public was eager for instruction of this sort; and it is reasonable to believe that they were studied by the artisans of

[1] Students may consult the valuable work of Vincenzo Nannucci, *Manuale della Letteratura del primo secolo della Lingua Italiana*, Firenze, Barbèra, 1874. The second volume contains copious specimens of thirteenth-century prose.

[2] Nannucci, *op. cit.* vol. ii. p. 95.

central Italy. The bas-reliefs and frescoes of incipient Italian art, the pavement of the Sienese Cathedral, the Palazzo della Ragione at Padua, bear traces of the percolation through all social strata of this literature. A more important work of style was the *De Regimine Principum*, of Egidio Colonna, translated from the French version by an unknown Tuscan hand; while Giamboni's Florentine version of Latini's *Tesoro* introduced the erudition of the most learned grammarian of his age to the Italians. Contemporaneously with this growth of vernacular treatises on rhetorical and ethical subjects, we may assume that memoirs and chronicles began to be written in the vulgar tongue. But so much doubt has recently been thrown upon the earliest monuments of Italian historiography that it must here suffice to indicate the change which was undoubtedly taking place in this branch also of composition toward the close of the thirteenth century.[1] Literature of all kinds yielded to the first strong impact of the native idiom. Epistles, for example, whether of private or of public import, were now occasionally written in Italian, as can be proved by reference to the published letters of Guittone d'Arezzo.[2]

The works hitherto mentioned belong to the latter half of the thirteenth century. Their style, speaking

[1] The journals of Matteo Spinelli, ascribed to an Apulian of the thirteenth century, were long accepted as the earliest vernacular attempt at history in prose. It has lately been suggested, with good show of argument, that they are fabrications of the sixteenth century. With regard to the similar doubts affecting the Malespini Chronicles and Dino Compagni, I may refer to my discussion of this question in the first volume of this work, *Age of the Despots*, pp. 230, 239–250.

[2] Nannucci, *op. cit.* p. 137.

generally, is dry and tentative. Except in the versions of French romances, which borrow grace from their originals, we do not find in them artistic charm of diction. The *Fiori* and *Giardini* are little better than common-place books, in which the author's personality is lost beneath a mass of extracts and citations. The beginning of the fourteenth century witnessed the growth of a new Italian prose. Of this second stage, the masterpieces are Villani's Chronicle, Dante's *Vita Nuova*, the *Fioretti di S. Francesco*, the *Leggende dei Santi Padri* of Domenico Cavalca, and Jacopo Passavanti's *Specchio della vera Penitenza*.[1] These writers have no lack of individuality. Their mind moves in their style, and gives a personal complexion to their utterance. The chief charm of their manner, so far as it is common to characters so diverse, is its grave and childlike spontaneity. For vividness of description, for natural simplicity of phrase, and for that amiable garrulity which rounds a picture by innumerable details and unconscious touches of graphic force, not one of the books of this period surpasses the *Fioretti*. Nor are the *Leggende* of Cavalca less admirable. Modern, especially Northern, students may discover too much suavity and unction in the writer's tone—a superfluity of sweetness which fatigues, a caressing tenderness that clogs. After reading a few pages, we lay the book down, and wonder whether it could really have been a grown man, and not a cherub flown from Fra Angelico's Paradise, who composed it. This infantine note belongs to the

[1] Of Villani's Chronicle I have already spoken sufficiently in the *Age of the Despots*, chap. 5, and of the *Vita Nuova* in this chapter (above, pp. 67-70).

cloister and the pulpit. It matches the simple credulity of the narrator, and well befits the miracles he loves to record. We seem to hear a good old monk gossiping to a party of rosy-cheeked novices, like those whom Sodoma painted in his frescoes of S. Benedict at Monte Oliveto. It need hardly be observed that neither in Villani's nor in Dante's prose do we find the same puerility. But all the *trecentisti* have a common character of limpidity, simplicity, and unaffected grace.

The difficulties under which even the best Italian authors labour while using their own language, incline them to an exaggerated admiration for these pearls of the *trecento*. They look back with envy to an age when men could write exactly as they thought and felt and spoke, without the tyranny of the *Vocabolario* or the fear of an Academy before their eyes. We, with whom the literary has always closely followed the spoken language, and who have, practically speaking, no dialects, while we recognise the purity of that incomparably transparent manner, cannot comprehend that it should be held up for imitation in the present age. To paint like Giotto would be easier than to write like Passavanti. The conditions of life and the modes of thought are so altered that the style of the *trecento* will not lend itself to modern requirements.

Among the prosaists of the fourteenth century—Cavalca, Villani, the author of the *Fioretti*, and Passavanti—Boccaccio meets us with a sudden surprise. They aimed at finding the readiest and most appropriate words to convey their meaning in the simplest, most effective manner. Without artistic purpose,

without premeditation, without side-glances at the classics, they wrote straightforward from their heart. There is little composition or connection in their work, no moulding of paragraphs or rounding of phrases, no oratorical development, no gradation of tone. Boccaccio, on the contrary, sought to give the fulness and sonority of Latin to the periods of Italian prose. He had the Ciceronian cadence and the labyrinthine sentences of Livy in view. By art of style he was bent on rendering the vulgar language a fit vehicle for learning, rhetoric, and history. In order to make it clear what sorts of changes he introduced, it will be necessary to compare his prose with that of his contemporaries. Dante used the following words to describe his first meeting with Beatrice [1]:

Nove fiate già, appresso al mio nascimento, era tornato lo cielo della luce quasi ad un medesimo punto, quanto alla sua propria girazione, quando alli miei occhi apparve prima la gloriosa Donna della mia mente, la quale fu chiamata da molti Beatrice, i quali non sapeano che si chiamare. Ella era già in questa vita stata tanto che nel suo tempo lo cielo stellato era mosso verso la parte d' oriente delle dodici parti l' una d' un grado: sì che quasi dal principio del suo anno nono apparve a me, ed io la vidi quasi alla fine del mio nono anno.

Boccaccio, relating his first glimpse of Fiammetta on April 17, 1341, spins the following cocoon of verbiage: [2]

Avvenne che un giorno, la cui prima ora Saturno avea signoreggiata, essendo già Febo co' suoi cavalli al sedecimo grado del celestiale Montone pervenuto, e nel quale il glorioso partimento del figliuolo di Giove dagli spogliati regni di Plutone si celebrava, io, della presente opera componitore, mi trovai in un grazioso e bel

[1] *Vita Nuova*, cap. 2.
[2] *Filocopo*, *Op. Volg.* vii. 4.

tempio in Partenope, nominato da colui che per deificarsi sostenne che fosse fatto di lui sacrificio sopra la grata, e quivi con canto pieno di dolce melodia ascoltava l' uficio che in tale giorno si canta, celebrato da' sacerdoti successori di colui che prima la corda cinse umilmente esaltando la povertade quella seguendo.

Dante's style is analytic and direct. The sentences follow each other naturally; and though the language is stiff, from scrupulous precision, and in one place intentionally obscure, it is free from affectation. Boccaccio aims at a synthetic presentation of all he means to say; and he calls nothing by its right name, if he can devise a periphrasis. The breathless period pants its laboured clauses out, and dwindles to a lame conclusion. The *Filocopo* was, however, an immature production. In order to do its author justice, and at the same time to compare his style with a graceful piece of fourteenth-century composition, I will select a passage from the *Fioretti di S. Francesco*, and place it beside one taken from the first novel of the Decameron. This is the episode of S. Anthony preaching to the fishes[1]:

E detto ch' egli ebbe così, subitamente venne alla riva a lui tanta moltitudine di pesci, grandi, piccoli e mezzani, che mai in quel mare nè in quel fiume non ne fu veduta sì grande moltitudine: e tutti teneano i capi fuori dell' acqua, e tutti stavano attenti verso la faccia di santo Antonio, e tutti in grandissima pace e mansuetudine e ordine: imperocchè dinanzi e più presso alla riva stavano i pesciolini minori, e dopo loro stavano i pesci mezzani, poi di dietro, dov' era l' acqua più profonda, stavano i pesci maggiori. Essendo dunque in cotale ordine e disposizione allogati i pesci, santo Antonio cominciò a predicare solennemente, e disse così: Fratelli miei pesci, molto siete tenuti, secondo la vostra possibilitade, di ringraziare il nostro Creatore, che v' ha dato così nobile elemento per vostra abitazione; sicchè, come vi piace, avete l' acque dolci e salse; e havvi dati molti rifugii a schifare le tempeste; havvi ancora dato elemento chiaro e

[1] *Fioretti di S. Francesco* (Venezia, 1853), p. 104.

trasparente, e cibo, per lo quale voi possiate vivere, etc., etc. . . . A queste e simiglianti parole e ammaestramenti di santo Antonio, cominciarono li pesci ad aprire la bocca, inchinaronli i capi, e con questi ed altri segnali di riverenza, secondo li modi a loro possibili, laudarono Iddio.

This is a portion of the character of Ser Ciapelletto:

Era questo Ciapelletto di questa vita. Egli essendo notajo, avea grandissima vergogna quando uno de' suoi strumenti (come che pochi ne facesse) fosse altro che falso trovato; de' quali tanti avrebbe fatti, di quanti fosse stato richesto, e quelli più volentieri in dono, che alcun altro grandemente salariato. Testimonianze false con sommo diletto diceva richesto e non richesto; e dandosi a' que' tempi in Francia a' saramenti grandissima fede, non curandosi fargli falsi, tante quistioni malvagiamente vincea, a quante a giurare di dire il vero sopra la sua fede era chiamato. Aveva oltre modo piacere, e forte vi studiava, in commettere tra amici e parenti e qualunque altra persona mali et inimicizie e scandali; de' quali quanto maggiori mali vedeva seguire, tanto più d' allegrezza prendea. Invitato ad uno omicidio o a qualunque altra rea cosa, senza negarlo mai, volenterosamente v' andava; e più volte a fedire et ad uccidere uomini colle proprie mani si trovò volentieri.

These examples will suffice to show how Boccaccio distinguished himself from the *trecentisti* in general. When his style attained perfection in the Decameron, it had lost the pedantry of his first manner, and combined the brevity of the best contemporary writers with rhetorical smoothness and intricacy. The artful structure of the period, and the cadences of what afterwards came to be known as 'numerous prose,' were carried to perfection. Still, though he was the earliest writer of a scientific style, Boccaccio failed to exercise a paramount influence over the language until the age of the Academies.[1] The writers of the

[1] See below, the chapter on the Purists.

fifteenth century, partly no doubt because these were chiefly men of the people, appear to have developed their manner out of the material of the *trecento* in general, modified by contemporary usage. This is manifest in the *Reali di Francia*, a work of considerable stylistic power, which cannot probably be dated earlier than the middle of the fifteenth century. The novelist Masuccio modelled his diction, so far as he was able, on the type of the Decameron, and Alberti owed much to the study of such works as the *Fiammetta*. Yet, speaking broadly, neither the excellences nor the defects of Boccaccio found devoted imitators until the epoch when the nation at large turned their attention to the formation of a common Italian style. It was then, in the days of Bembo and Sperone, that Boccaccio took rank with Petrarch as an infallible authority on points of language. The homage rendered at that period to the Decameron decided the destinies of Italian prose, and has since been deplored by critics who believe Boccaccio to have established a false standard of taste.[1] This is a question which must be left to the Italians to decide. One thing, however, is clear; that a nation schooled by humanistic studies of a Latin type, divided by their dialects, and removed by the advance of culture beyond the influences of the purer *trecentisti*, found in the rhetorical diction of the Decameron a common model better suited to their taste and capacity than the simple style of the Villani could have furnished.

[1] See Capponi's *Storia della Repubblica di Firenze*, lib. iii. cap. 9, for a very energetic statement of this view.

Boccaccio died in 1375, seventeen months after the death at Arquà of his master, Petrarch. The painter Andrea Orcagna died about the same period. With these three great artists the genius of medieval Florence sank to sleep. A temporary torpor fell upon the people, who during the next half century produced nothing of marked originality in literature and art. The Middle Age had passed away. The Renaissance was still in preparation. When Boccaccio breathed his last, men felt that the elder sources of inspiration had failed, and that no more could be expected from the spirit of the previous centuries. Heaven and hell, the sanctuaries of the soul, the garden of this earth, had been traversed. The tentative essays and scattered preludings, the dreams and visions, the preparatory efforts of all previous modern literatures, had been completed, harmonised and presented to the world in the master-works of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio. What remained but to make a new start? This step forward or aside was now to be taken in the Classical Revival. Well might Sacchetti exclaim in that *canzone*[1] which is at once Boccaccio's funeral

[1] See *Rime di M. Cino da Pistoja e d' altri del Secolo xiv* (Firenze, Barbèra, 1862), p. 528. It begins :

Ora è mancata ogni poësia
E vote son le case di Parnaso.

It contains the famous lines :

Come deggio sperar che surga Dante
Che già chi il sappia legger non si trova?
E Giovanni che è morto ne fe scola.

Not less interesting is Sacchetti's funeral Ode for Petrarch (*ibid.* p. 517). Both show a keen sense of the situation with respect to the decline of literature.

dirge and also the farewell of Florence to the fourteenth century:

Sonati sono i corni
D' ogni parte a ricolta ;
La stagione è rivolta :
Se tornerà non so, ma credo tardi.

CHAPTER III.

THE TRANSITION.

The Church, Chivalry, the Nation—The National Element in Italian Literature—Florence—Italy between 1373 and 1490—Renascent Nationality—Absorption in Scholarship—Vernacular Literature follows an obscure Course—Final Junction of the Humanistic and Popular Currents—Renascence of Italian—The Italian Temperament—Importance of the Quattrocento—Sacchetti's Novels—Ser Giovanni's *Pecorone*—Sacchetti's and Ser Giovanni's Poetry—Lyrics of the Villa and the Piazza—Nicolò Soldanieri—Alesso Donati—His Realistic Poems—Followers of Dante and Petrarch—Political Poetry of the Guelfs and Ghibellines—Fazio degli Uberti—Saviozzo da Siena—Elegies on Dante—Sacchetti's Guelf Poems—Advent of the *Bourgeoisie*—Discouragement of the Age—Fazio's *Dittamondo*—Rome and Alvernia—Frezzi's *Quadriregio*—Dantesque Imitation—Blending of Classical and Medieval Motives—Matteo Palmieri's *Città di Vita*—The Fate of *Terza Rima*—Catherine of Siena—Her Letters—S. Bernardino's Sermons—Salutati's Letters—Alessandra degli Strozzi—Florentine Annalists—Giov. Cavalcanti—Corio's *History of Milan*—Matarazzo's *Chronicle of Perugia*—Masuccio and his *Novellino*—His Style and Genius—Alberti—Born in Exile—His Feeling for Italian—Enthusiasm for the Roman Past—The Treatise on the Family—Its Plan—Digression on the Problem of its Authorship—Pandolfini or Alberti—The *Deiciarchia*—*Tranquillità dell' Animo*—*Teogenio*—Alberti's Religion—Dedication of the Treatise on Painting—Minor Works in Prose on Love—*Ecatomfila*, *Amiria*, *Deifira*, etc.—Misogynism—Novel of *Ippolito and Leonora*—Alberti's Poetry—Review of Alberti's Character and his Relation to the Age—Francesco Colonna—The *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*—Its Style—Its Importance as a Work of the Transition—A Romance of Art, Love, Humanism—The Allegory—Polia—Antiquity—Relation of this Book to Boccaccio and Valla—It Foreshadows the Renaissance.

THE two preceding chapters will have made it clear that the Church, Chivalry, and the Nation contributed

their several quotas to the growth of Italian literature.[1] The ecclesiastical or religious element, so triumphantly expressed in the Divine Comedy, was not peculiar to the Italians. They held it in common with the whole of Christendom; and though the fabric of the Roman Church took form in Italy, though the race gave S. Francis, S. Thomas, and S. Bonaventura to the militia of the medieval faith, still the Italians as a nation were not specifically religious. Piety, which is quite a different thing from ecclesiastical organisation, was never the truest and sincerest accent of their genius. Had it been so, the history of Latin Christianity would have followed another course, and the schism of the sixteenth century might have been avoided.

The chivalrous element they shared, at a considerable disadvantage, with the rest of feudal Europe. Chivalry was not indigenous to Italian soil, nor did it ever flourish there. The literature which it produced in France, became Italian only when the Guidi and Dante gave it philosophical significance. Petrarch, who represents this motive, as Dante represents the ecclesiastical, generalised Provençal poetry. His *Canzoniere* cannot be styled a masterpiece of chivalrous art. Its spirit is modern and human in a wider and more comprehensive sense.

To characterise the national strain in this complex

[1] I may refer to the *Age of the Despots*, 2nd edition, pp. 55-60, for a brief review of the circumstances under which the Nation defined itself against the Church and the Empire—the ecclesiastical and feudal or chivalrous principles—during the Wars of Investiture and Independence. In Carducci's essay *Dello Svolgimento della Letteratura nazionale* will be found an eloquent and succinct exposition of the views I have attempted to express in these paragraphs.

pedigree of culture is no easy task—chiefly because it manifested itself under two apparently antagonistic forms; first in the recovery of the classics by the scholars of the fifteenth century; secondly in the portraiture of Italian character and temperament by writers of romance and fiction. The divergence of these two main currents of literary energy upon the close of the middle ages, and their junction in the prime of the Renaissance, are the topics of my present volume.

We have seen how tenaciously the Italians clung to memories of ancient Rome, and how their history deprived them of that epical material which started modern literature among the northern races. While the vulgar language was being formed from the dialects into which rustic Latin had divided, a new nationality grew into shape by an analogous process out of the remnants of the old Italic population, fused with recent immigrants. Absorbing Greek blood in the south and Teutonic in the north, this composite race maintained the ascendancy of the Romanised people, in obedience to laws whereby the prevalent and indigenous strain outlives and assimilates ingredients from without. Owing to a variety of causes, among which must be reckoned geographical isolation and imperfect Lombard occupation, the purest Italic stock survived upon the Tuscan plains and highlands, between the Tyrrhene Sea and the Apennines, and where the Arno and the Tiber start together from the mountains of Arezzo. This region was the cradle of the new Italian language, the stronghold of the new Italian nation. Its centre, political, commercial and

intellectual, was Florence, which gave birth to the three great poets of the fourteenth century. Though Florence developed her institutions later than the Lombard communes, she maintained a civic independence longer than any State but Venice; and her *popolo* may be regarded as the type of the popular Italian element. Here the genius of Italy became conscious of itself, and here the people found a spokesman in Boccaccio. Abandoning ecclesiastical and feudal traditions, Boccaccio concentrated his force upon the delineation of his fellow-countrymen as he had learned to know them. The Italians of the new age start into distinctness in his work, with the specific qualities they were destined to maintain and to mature during the next two centuries. Thus Boccaccio fully represents one factor of what I have called the national element. At the same time, he occupies a hardly less important place in relation to the other or the humanistic factor. Like his master Petrarch, he pronounced with ardour and decision for that scholarship which restored the link between the present and the past of the Italian race. Independently of their achievements in modern literature, we have to regard the humanistic efforts of these two great writers as a sign that the national element had asserted itself in antagonism to the Church and chivalry.

The recovery of the classics was, in truth, the decisive fact in Italian evolution. Having attained full consciousness in the Florence of Dante's age, the people set forth in search of their spiritual patrimony. They found it in the libraries. They became pos-

sessed of it through the labours of the scholars. Italian literature during the first three quarters of the fifteenth century merged, so far as polite society was concerned, in Humanism, the history of which has already been presented to the reader in the second volume of this work.[1] For a hundred years, from the publication of the Decameron in 1373 to the publication of Poliziano's *Stanze*, the genius of Italy was engaged in an exploratory pilgrimage, the ultimate end of which was the restoration of the national inheritance in ancient Rome. This process of renascent classicism, which was tantamount to renascent nationality, retarded the growth of the vulgar literature. Yet it was imperatively demanded not only by the needs of Europe at large, but more particularly and urgently by the Italians themselves, who, unlike the other modern races, had no starting-point but ancient Rome. The immediate result of the humanistic movement was the separation of the national element into two sections, learned and popular, Latin and Italian. The common people, who had repeated Dante's *Canzoni*, and whose life Boccaccio had portrayed in the Decameron, were now divided from the rising class of scholars and professors. Cultivated persons of all ranks despised Italian, and spent their time in studies beyond the reach of the laity. Like some mountain rivers after emerging from the highlands of their origin, the vernacular literature passed as it were for a season underground, and lost itself in unexplored ravines. Absorbed into the masses of the people, it continued an obscure but by no means insignificant

[1] *Revival of Learning.*

course, whence it was destined to reappear at the right moment, when the several constituents of the nation had attained the sense of intellectual unity. This sense of unity was the product of the classical revival; for the activity of the wandering professors and the fanatical enthusiasm for the ancients were needed to create a common consciousness, a common standard of taste and intelligence in the peninsula. It must in this connection be remembered that the vernacular literature of the fourteenth century, though it afterwards became the glory of Italy as a whole, was originally Florentine. The medium prepared by the scholars was demanded in order that the Tuscan classics should be accepted by the nation as their own. Toward the close of the fifteenth century, a fusion between the humanistic and the vulgar literatures was made; and this is the renascence of Italian—no longer Tuscan, but participated by the race at large. The poetry of the people then received a form refined by classic learning; and the two sections of what I have called the national element, joined to produce the genuine Italian culture of the golden age.

It is necessary, for the sake of clearness, to insist upon this point, which forms the main motive of my present theme. After the death of Boccaccio the history of Italian literature is the history of that national element which distinguished itself from the ecclesiastical and the chivalrous, and at last in the Decameron asserted its superiority over both. But the stream of intellectual energy bifurcates. During the fifteenth century, the Latin instincts of the new Italic people found vigorous expansion in the human-

istic movement, while the vernacular literature carried on a fitful and obscure, but potent, growth among the proletariate. At the end of that century, both currents, the learned and the popular, the classical and the modern, reunited on a broader plane. The nation, educated by scholarship and brought to a sense of its identity, resumed the vulgar tongue; and what had hitherto been Tuscan, now became Italian. In this renascence neither the religious nor the feudal principle regained firm hold upon the race. Their influence is still discernible, however, in the lyrics of the Petrarchisti and the epics of Orlando; for nothing which has once been absorbed into a people's thought is wholly lost. How they were transmuted by the action of the genuine Italic genius, triumphant now upon all quarters of the field, will appear in the sequel of these volumes; while it remains for another work to show in what way, under the influences of the Counter-Reformation, both the ecclesiastical and the chivalrous elements reasserted themselves for a brief moment in Tasso. Still even in Tasso we recognise the Italian courtier rather than the knight or the ascetic. For the rest, it is clear that the spirit of Boccaccio—that is, the spirit of the Florentine people—refined by humanistic discipline and glorified by the reawakening of Italy to a sense of intellectual unity, determined the character of literature during its most brilliant period.[1]

[1] It is not quite exact, though convenient, to identify Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio severally with the religious, chivalrous and national principles of which I have been speaking. Petrarch stands midway. With Dante he shares the chivalrous, with Boccaccio the humanistic side of the national element. Though Boccaccio anticipates in his work the literature of the Renaissance, yet Petrarch was certainly not less influen-

Many peculiarities of the Renaissance in Italy, and of the Renaissance in general, as communicated through Italians to Europe, can be explained by this emergence of the national Italic temperament. Political and positive; keenly sensitive to natural beauty, and gifted with a quick artistic faculty; neither persistently religious nor profoundly speculative; inclined to scepticism, but accepting the existing order with sarcastic acquiesence; ironical and humorous rather than satirical; sensuous in feeling, realistic in art, rhetorical in literature; abhorring mysticism and ill-fashioned for romantic exaltation; worldly, with a broad and genial toleration; refined in taste and social conduct, but violent in the indulgence of personal proclivities; born old in contrast with the youth of the Teutonic races; educated by long experience to expect a morrow differing in no essentials from to-day or yesterday; demanding, therefore, from the moment all that it can yield of satisfaction to the passions—the Italians, thus constituted, in their vigorous reaction against the middle ages, secularised the Papacy, absorbed the Paganism of the classics, substituted an æsthetic for an ethical ideal, democratised society, and opened new horizons for pioneering energy in all the fields of knowledge. The growth of their intelligence was precocious and fore-doomed to a sudden check; nor was it to be expected that their solutions of the deepest problems should satisfy races of a different fibre and a posterity educated on the scientific methods of investi-

tial as an authority in style. Ariosto represents the fusion of both sections of the national element in literature—Italian is distinguished from Tuscan.

gation. Unexpected factors were added to the general calculation by the German Reformation and the political struggles which preceded the French Revolution. Yet the influence of this Italian temperament, in forming and preparing the necessary intellectual medium in modern Europe, can hardly be exaggerated.

When the Italian genius manifested itself in art, in letters and in scholarship, national unity was already an impossibility.[1] The race had been broken up into republics and tyrannies. Their political forces were centrifugal rather than centripetal. The first half of the fifteenth century was the period when their division into five great powers, held together by the frail bond of diplomacy, had been accomplished, and when Italy was further distracted by the ambition of unprincipled *condottieri*. Under these conditions of dismemberment, the Renaissance came to perfection, and the ideal unity of the Italians was achieved. The space of forty years' tranquillity and equilibrium, which preceded Charles VIII.'s invasion, marked an epoch of recombination and consolidation, when the two currents of national energy, learned and popular, met to form the culture of the golden age. After being Tuscan and neo-Latin, the literature which expressed the nation now became Italian. Such is the importance of the *Quattrocento* in Italian history—long denied, late recognised, but now at length acknowledged as necessary and decisive for both Italy and Europe.

In the present chapter I propose to follow the transition from the middle ages effected by writers who, though they used the mother tongue, take rank among

[1] See *Age of the Despots*, chap. 2.

cultivated authors. The two succeeding chapters will be devoted to the more obscure branches of vernacular literature which flourished among the people.

Franco Sacchetti, who uttered the funeral dirge of the fourteenth century, was also the last considerable writer of that age.[1] Born about the year 1335 of one of the old noble families of Florence, he lived until the end of the century, employed in various public duties and assiduous in his pursuit of letters.[2] He was a friend of Boccaccio, and felt the highest admiration not only for his novels but also for his learning, though he tells us in the preface to his own three hundred tales that he was himself a man of slender erudition—*uomo discolo e grosso*.[3] From this preface we also learn that enthusiasm for the Decameron prompted him to write a set of novels on his own account.[4] Though Sacchetti loved and worshipped Boccaccio, he did not imitate his style. The *Novelle* are composed in the purest vernacular, without literary artifice or rhetorical ornament. They boast no framework of fiction, like that which lends the setting of romance to the Decameron; nor do they pretend to be more than short anecdotes with here and there a word of moralising from the author. Yet the student of Italian, eager to know what speech was current in

[1] See above, p. 138. All that is known about Sacchetti's life may be found in the Discourse of Monsignor Giov. Bottari, prefixed to Silvestri's edition of the *Novelle*.

[2] For Sacchetti's conception of a citizen's duty, proving him a son of Italy's heroic age, see the sonnet *Amar la patria*, in Monsignor Bottari's Discourse above mentioned.

[3] See the Sonnet *Pien di quell' acqua* written to Boccaccio on his entering the Certosa at Naples.

[4] Here too he mentions a translation of the *Decameron* into English.

the streets of Florence during the last half of that century, will value Sacchetti's idiomatic language even more highly than Boccaccio's artful periods. He tells us what the people thought and felt, in phrases borrowed from their common talk. The majority of the novels treat of Florentine life, while some of them bring illustrious Florentines—Dante and Giotto and Guido Cavalcanti—on the scene. Sacchetti's preface vouches for the truth of his stories; but, whether they be strictly accurate or not, we need not doubt their fidelity to contemporary customs, domestic manners, and daily conversation. Sacchetti inspires a certain confidence, a certain feeling of friendliness. And yet what a world is revealed in his *Novelle*—a world without tenderness, pathos, high principle, passion, or enthusiasm—men and women delighting in coarse humour, in practical jokes of inconceivable vulgarity, in language of undisguised grossness, in cruelty, fraud, violence, incontinence! The point is almost always some clever trick, a *burla* or a *beffa*, or a piece of subtly-planned retaliation. Knaves and fools are the chief actors in this comic theatre; and among the former we find many friars, among the latter many husbands. To accept the *Novelle* as adequate in every detail to the facts of Florentine society, would be uncritical. They must chiefly be used for showing what passed for fun among the burghers, and what seemed fit and decent topics for discussion. Studied from that point of view, and also for the abundant light they throw on customs and fashions, Sacchetti's tales are highly valuable. The *bourgeoisie* of Florence lives again in their animated pages. We have in them a literature

written to amuse, if not precisely to represent, a civic society closely packed within a narrow area, witty and pleasure-loving, acutely sensitive to the ridiculous, with strongly-defined tastes and a decided preference for pungent flavours. One distinctive Florentine quality emerges with great clearness. That is a malicious and jibing humour—the malice Dante took with him to the *Inferno*; the malice expressed by Il Lasca and Firenzuola, epitomised in Florentine nicknames, and condensed in Rabelaisian anecdotes which have become classical. It reaches its climax in the cruel but laughter-moving jest played by Brunelleschi on the unfortunate cabinet-maker, which has been transmitted to us in the novel of *Il Grasso, Legnaiuolo.*

Somewhat later than Sacchetti's *Novelle*, appeared another collection of more or less veracious anecdotes, compiled by a certain Ser Giovanni.[1] He called it *Il Pecorone*, which may be interpreted 'The Simpleton:'

> Ed è per nome il Pecoron chiamato,
> Perchè ci ha dentro novi barbagianni;
> Ed io son capo di cotal brigata,
> E vo belando come pecorone,
> Facendo libri, e non ne so boccata.

Nothing is known about Ser Giovanni, except what he tells us in the Sonnet just quoted. From it we learn that he began his *Novelle* in the year 1378—the year of the Ciompi Revolution at Florence. As a frame-

[1] This should also be the place to mention the *Novelle* of Giovanni Sercambi of Lucca. They have lately been re-edited by Professor d' Ancona, Bologna, Romagnoli, 1871. They are short tales, historical and moral, drawn from miscellaneous medieval sources, and resembling the *Novellino* in type. Two of them (*Novelle* ix. and x., *ed. cit.* pp. 62–74) are interesting as forming part of the Legend of Dante the Poet.

work for his stories, he devised a frigid romance, which may be briefly told. Sister Saturnina, the prioress of a convent at Forlì, was so wise and beautiful that her fame reached Florence, where a handsome and learned youth, named Auretto, fell in love with her by hearsay. He took orders, journeyed across the Apennines, and contrived to be appointed chaplain to Saturnina's nuns. In due course of time she discreetly returned his affection, and, managing their affairs with prudence and decorum, they met for private converse and mutual solace in a parlour of the convent. Here they whiled away the hours by telling stories—entertaining, instructive, or romantic. The collection is divided into twenty-five days; and since each lover tells a tale, there are fifty *Novelle*, interspersed with songs after the fashion of Boccaccio. In the style, no less than in the method of the book, Ser Giovanni shows himself a closer follower of the Decameron than Sacchetti. His novels have a wide range of incidents, embracing tragic and pathetic motives no less than what is humorous. They are treated rhetorically, and, instead of being simple anecdotes, aim at the varied movement of a drama. The language, too, is literary, and less idiomatic than Sacchetti's. Antiquarians will find in some of these discourses an interest separate from what is common to works of fiction. They represent how history was communicated to the people of that day. Saturnina, for example, relates the myth of Troy and the foundation of Fiesole, which, as Dante tells us, the Tuscan mothers of Cacciaguida's age sang to their children. The lives of the Countess Matilda and Frederick

Barbarossa, the antiquity and wealth of the Tuscan cities, the tragedy of Corso Donati, Giano della Bella's exile, the Angevine Conquest of Sicily, the origin of Guelfs and Ghibellines in Italy, Attila's apocryphal siege of Florence, supply materials for narratives in which the true type of the *Novella* disappears. Yet Ser Giovanni mingles more amusing stories with these lectures;[1] and the historical dissertations are managed with such grace, with so golden a simplicity of style, that they are readable. Of a truth it is comic to think of the enamoured monk and nun meeting in the solitude of their parlour to exchange opinions upon Italian history. Though he had the good qualities of a *trecentisto* prosaist, Ser Giovanni was in this respect but a poor artist.

Both Sacchetti and Ser Giovanni were poets of no mean ability. As in his prose, so also in his *Canzoni a Ballo*, the author of the *Pecorone* followed Boccaccio, without, however, attaining to that glow and sensuous abandonment which renders the lyrics no less enchanting than the narratives of the Decameron. His style is smooth and fluent, suggesting literary culture rather than spontaneous inspiration.[2] Yet it is always lucid. Through the transparent language we see straight into the hearts of lovers as the novelist of Florence understood them. Written for the most part in the seven-lined stanza with recurring couplet, which Guido

[1] For example, the first Novel of the fourth day is the story which Shakspere dramatised in *The Merchant of Venice*, and forms, as everyone can see, the authentic source of that comedy.

[2] It must be remarked that the text of *Il Pecorone* underwent Domenichi's revision in the sixteenth century, which may account for a certain flatness.

Cavalcanti first made fashionable, these *Ballate* give lyrical expression to a great variety of tender situations. The emotion of first love, the pains and pleasures of a growing passion, the anguish of betrayal, regrets, quarrels, reconciliations, are successively treated. In short, Ser Giovanni versified and set to music all the principal motives upon which the *Novella* of feeling turned, and formed an *ars amandi* adapted to the use of the people. In this sense his poems seem to have been accepted, for we find MSS. of the *Ballate* detached from the prose of *Il Pecorone*.[1] Among the most striking may be mentioned the canzonet *Tradita sono*, which retrospectively describes the joy of a girl in her first love; another on the fashions of Florentine ladies, *Quante leggiadre*; and the lamentation of a woman whose lover has abandoned her, and who sees no prospect but the cloister—*Oi me lassa*.[2]

Ser Giovanni's lyrics are echoes of the city, where maidens danced their rounds upon the piazza in May evenings, and young men courted the beauty of the hour with songs and visits to her chamber:

> Con quanti dolci suon e con che canti
> Io era visitata tutto 'l giorno!
> E nella zambra venivan gli amanti,
> Facendo festa e standomi intorno:
> Ed io guardava nel bel viso adorno,
> Che d' allegrezza mi cresceva il core.

[1] See Carducci, *Cantilene e Ballate, Strambotti e Madrigali nei Secoli xiii e xiv*, Pisa, Nistri, 1871. Pp. 176–205 contain a reprint of these lyrics. Carducci's work *Intorno ad alcune Rime*, Imola, 1876, may be consulted at pp. 54 *et seq.* for the origin, wide diffusion, and several species of the popular dance-song.

[2] *Cantilene, etc.* pp. 199, 196, 204.

Franco Sacchetti carries us to somewhat different scenes. The best of his madrigals and canzonets describe the pleasures of country life. They are not genuinely rustic; nor do they, in Theocritean fashion, attempt to render the beauty of the country from the peasant's point of view. On the contrary, they owe their fascination to the contrast between the simplicity of the villa and the unrest of the town, where:

Mal vi si dice e di ben far vi è caro.

They are written for and by the *bourgeois* who has escaped from shops and squares and gossiping street-corners. The keynote of this poetry, which has always something of the French *école buissonnière* in its fresh unalloyed enjoyment, is struck in a song describing the return of Spring[1]:

Benedetta sia la state
Che ci fa sì solazzare!
Maladetto sia lo verno
Che a città ci fa tornare!

The poet summons his company of careless folk, on pleasure bent:

No' siam una compagnia,
I' dico di cacciapensieri.

He takes them forth into the fields among the farms and olive-gardens, bidding them leave prudence and grave thoughts within the lofty walls of Florence town:

Il senno e la contenenza
Lasciam dentro all' alte mura
Della città di Fiorenza.

[1] *Cantilene, etc.* p. 211.

This note of gaiety and pure enjoyment is sustained throughout his lyrics. In one *Ballata* he describes a country girl, caught by thorns, and unable to avoid her admirer's glance.[1] Another gives a pretty picture of a maiden with a wreath of olive-leaves and silver.[2] A third is a little idyll of two girls talking to their lambs, and followed by an envious old woman.[3] A fourth is a biting satire on old women—*Di diavol vecchia femmina ha natura.*[4] A fifth is that incomparably graceful canzonet, *O vaghe montanine pasturelle*, the popularity of which is proved by the fact that it was orally transmitted for many generations, and attributed in after days to both Lorenzo de' Medici and Angelo Poliziano.[5] Indeed, it may be said in passing that Poliziano owed much to Sacchetti. This can be seen by comparing Sacchetti's *Ballata* on the Gentle Heart, and his pastoral of the Thorn-tree with the later poet's lyrics.[6]

The unexpressed contrast between the cautious town-life of the burgher poet and his licence in the villa, to which I have already called attention, determines the character of many minor lyrics by Sacchetti.[7] We comprehend the spirit of these curious poems, at once popular and fashionable, when we

[1] *Cantilene, etc.* p. 220.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 219. Compare *Passando con pensier* in the *Rime di Messer Cino e d' altri* (Barbèra), p. 563.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 233.

[4] *Ibid.* p. 231.

[5] *Ibid.* p. 214 and note. The popularity of this dance-poem is further proved by a pious parody written to be sung to the same air with it : 'O vaghe di Gesù, o verginelle.' See *Laudi Spirituali* (Firenze, Molini, 1863), p. 105.

[6] *Ibid.* pp. 218, 217.

[7] See *ibid.* pp. 252–256, 259, 263.

compare them with medieval French *Pastourelles*, or with similar compositions by wandering Latin students. In the *Carmin Burana* may be found several little poems, describing the fugitive loves of truant scholars with rustic girls, which prove that, long before Sacchetti's age, the town had sought spring-solace in the country.[1] Men are too apt to fancy that what they consider the refinements of passion and fashion (the finer edge, for example, put upon desire by altering its object from the known and trivial to the untried and exceptional, from venal beauties in the city to shepherd maidens on the village-green) are inventions of their own times. Yet it was precisely a refinement of this sort which gave peculiar flavour to Sacchetti's songs in the fourteenth century, and which made them sought after. They had great vogue in Italy, enjoying the privilege of popularity among the working classes, and helping to diffuse that sort of pastoral part-song which we still know as Madrigal.[2] Sacchetti was himself a good musician; many of his songs were set to music by himself, and others by his friends. This gives a pleasant old-world homeliness to the Latin titles inscribed beneath the rubrics—*Franciscus de Organis sonum dedit; Intonatum per Francum Sacchetti; Francus sonum dedit;* and so forth.

The Ballads and Madrigals of Niccolò Soldanieri should be mentioned in connection with Sacchetti;

[1] It is enough to mention *Exit diluculo, Vere dulci mediante, Æstivali sub fervore.*

[2] I must briefly refer to Carducci's Essay on 'Musica e Poesia nel mondo elegante italiano del secolo xiv,' in his *Studi Letterari*, Livorno, Vigo, 1874, and to my own translations from some of the there published Madrigals in *Sketches and Studies in Italy*, pp. 214–216.

though they do not detach themselves in any marked way from the style of love poetry practised at the close of the fourteenth century.[1] The case is different with Alesso Donati's lyrics. In them we are struck by a new gust of coarse and powerful realism, which has no parallel among the elder poets except in the savage sonnets of Cecco Angiolieri. Vividly natural situations are here detached from daily life and delineated with intensity of passion, vehement sincerity. Sacchetti's gentleness and genial humour have disappeared. In their place we find a dramatic energy and a truth of language that are almost terrible. Each of the little scenes, which I propose to quote in illustration of these remarks, might be compared to etchings bitten with aquafortis into copper. Here, for example, is a nun, who has resolved to throw aside her veil and follow her lover in a page's dress [2]:

La dura corda e 'l vel bruno e la tonica
Gittar voglio e lo scapolo
Che mi tien qui rinchiusa e fammi monica;
Poi teco a guisa d' assetato giovane,
Non già che si sobarcoli,
Venir me 'n voglio ove fortuna piovane:
E son contenta star per serva e cuoca,
Chè men mi cocerò ch' ora mi cuoca.

Here is a dialogue at dawn between a woman and her paramour. The presence of the husband sleeping in the chamber is suggested with a brutal vigour [3]:

Dè vattene oggimai, ma pianamente,
Amor; per dio, sì piano
Che non ti senta il mal vecchio villano.
Ch' egli sta sentecchioso, e, se pur sente

[1] Carducci, *Cantilene*, pp. 265–296. [2] *Op. cit.* p. 298.
[3] *Op. cit.* p. 301.

Ch' i' die nel letto volta,
Temendo abbraccia me no gli sie tolta.
Che tristo faccia Iddio chi gli m' à data
E chi spera 'n villan buona derrata.

Scarcely less forcible is the girl's vow against her mother, who keeps her shut at home[1]:

In pena vivo qui sola soletta
Giovin rinchiusa dalla madre mia,
La qual mi guarda con gran gelosia.
Ma io le giuro alla croce di Dio
Che s' ella mi terrà qui più serrata,
Ch' i' diro—Fa' con Dio, vecchia arrabiata;
E gitterò la rocca, il fuso e l' ago,
Amor, fuggendo a te di cui m' appago.

To translate these madrigals would be both difficult and undesirable. It is enough to have printed the original texts. They prove that aristocratic versifiers at this period were adopting the style of the people, and adding the pungency of brief poetic treatment to episodes suggested by *novelle*.[2]

While dealing with the Novelle and the semi-popular literature of this transition period, I have hitherto neglected those numerous minor poets who continued the traditions of the earlier *trecento*.[3] There are two main reasons for this preference. In the first place, the *novella* was destined to play a most important part in the history of the Renaissance, imposing its own laws of composition upon species so remote as the religious drama and romantic epic.

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 300.

[2] It may be worth mentioning that Soldanieri and Donati as well as Sacchetti belonged to the old nobility of Florence, the Grandi celebrated by name in Dante's *Paradiso*.

[3] See Trucchi's *Poesie Inedite*, and the *Rime Antiche Toscane*, cited above, for copious collections of these poets.

In the second place, the dance-songs, canzonets and madrigals of Sacchetti's epoch lived upon the lips of the common folk, who during the fifteenth century carried Italian literature onward through a subterranean channel.[1] When vernacular poetry reappeared into the light of erudition and the Courts, the influences of that popular style, which drew its origin from Boccaccio and Sacchetti rather than from Dante or the Trovatori, determined the manner of Lorenzo de' Medici and Poliziano. Meanwhile the learned poems of the latest *trecentisti* were forgotten with the lumber of the middle ages. For the special purpose, therefore, of this volume, which only regards the earlier stages of Italian literature in so far as they preceded and conditioned the Renaissance, it was necessary to give the post of honour to Boccaccio's followers. Some mention should, however, here be made of those contemporaries and imitators of Petrarch, in whom the traditions of the fourteenth century expired. It is not needful to pass in review the many versifiers who treated the old themes of chivalrous love with meritorious conventional facility. The true life of the Italians was not here; and the phase of literature which the Sicilian School inaugurated, survived already as an anachronism. The case is different with such poetry as dealt immediately with contemporary politics. In the declamatory compositions of this age, we hear the echoes of the Guelf and Ghibelline wars. The force of that great struggle was already spent; but for the partisans of either faction, passion enough sur-

[1] This can be seen in Carducci's *Cantilene*, pp. 115, 116, 150, and in his *Studi Letterari*, pp. 374–446.

vived to furnish genuine inspiration. Fazio degli Uberti's *sermintese* on the cities of Italy, for example, was written in the bitter spirit of an exiled Ghibelline.[1] His ode to Charles IV. is a torrent of vehement medieval abuse, poured forth against an Emperor who had shown himself unworthy of his place in Italy[2]:

> Sappi ch' i' son Italia che ti parlo,
> Di Lusimburgo ignominioso Carlo!

After detailing the woes which have befallen her in consequence of her abandonment by the imperial master, Italy addresses herself to God:

> Tu dunque, Giove, perchè 'l santo uccello . . .
> Da questo Carlo quarto
> Imperador non togli e dalle mani
> Degli altri lurchi moderni germani,
> Che d' aquila un allocco n' hanno fatto?

The Italian Ghibellines had, indeed, good reason to complain that German gluttons, Cæsars in nought but name, who only thought of making money by their sale of fiefs and honours, had changed the eagle of the Empire into an obscene night-flying bird of prey. The same spirit is breathed in Fazio's ode on Rome.[3] He portrays the former mistress of the world as a lady clad in weeds of mourning, 'ancient, august and honourable, but poor and needy as her habit showed, prudent in speech and of great puissance.' She bids

[1] *O pellegrina Italia. Rime di Cino e d' altri* (Barbèra), p. 318. I shall quote from this excellent edition of Carducci, as being most accessible to general readers. The *Sermintese* or *Serventese*, it may be parenthetically said, was a form of satirical and occasional lyric adapted from the Provençal *Sirvente*.

[2] *Cino*, etc. p. 342.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 334.

the poet rouse his fellow-countrymen from their sleep of sloth and drunkenness, to reassert the majesty of the empire owed to Italy and Rome:

> O figliuol mio, da quanta crudel guerra
> Tutti insieme verremo a dolce pace,
> Se Italia soggiace
> A un solo Re che al mio voler consente!

This is the last echo of the *De Monarchiâ*. The great imperial idea, so destructive to Italian confederation, so dazzling to patriots of Dante's fibre, expires amid the wailings of minstrels who cry for the impossible, and haunt the Courts of petty Lombard princes.

In another set of *Canzoni* we listen to Guelf and Ghibelline recriminations, rising from the burghs of Tuscany. The hero of these poems is Gian Galeazzo Visconti, rightly recognised by the Guelfs of Florence as a venomous and selfish tyrant, foolishly belauded by the Ghibellines of Siena as the vindicator of imperial principles. The Emperors have abandoned Italy; the Popes are at Avignon. The factions which their quarrels generated, agitate their people still, but on a narrower basis. Sacchetti slings invectives against the *maladetta serpe, aspro tiranno con amaro fele*, who shall be throttled by the Church and Florence, leagued to crush the Lombard despots.[1] Saviozzo da Siena addresses the same Visconti as *novella monarchia, giusto signore, clemente padre, insigne, virtuoso*. By his means the *dolce vedovella*, Rome or Italy, shall at last find peace.[2] This Duke of Milan, it will be remembered, had already ordered the crown

[1] *Cino, etc.* p. 548.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 586

of Italy from his Court-jeweller, and was advancing on his road of conquest, barred only by Florence, when the Plague cut short his career in 1402. The poet of Siena exhorts him to take courage for his task, in lines that are not deficient in a certain fire of inspiration:

> Tu vedi in ciel la fiammeggiante aurora,
> Le stelle tue propizie e rutilanti,
> E' segni tutti quanti
> Ora disposti alla tua degna spada.

In another strophe he refers to the Italian crown:

> Ecco qui Italia che ti chiama padre,
> Che per te spera omai di trionfare,
> E di sè incoronare
> Le tue benigne è preziose chiome.

An anonymous sonnetteer of the same period uses similar language[1]:

> Roma vi chiama—Cesar mio novello,
> I' son ignuda, e l' anima pur vive;
> Or mi coprite col vostro mantello.

The Ghibelline poets, whether they dreamed like Fazio of Roman Empire, or flattered the Visconti with a crown to be won by triumph over the detested Guelfs, made play with Dante's memory. Some of the most interesting lyrics of the school are elegies upon his death. To this class belong two sonnets by Pieraccio Tedaldi and Mucchio da Lucca.[2] Nor must Boccaccio's noble pair of sonnets, although he was not a political poet, be here forgotten.[3] That Dante was

[1] *Cino, etc.* p. 391.
[2] *Ibid.* pp. 199, 200.
[3] *Ibid.* pp. 384, 389.

diligently studied can be seen, not only in the diction of this epoch, but also in numerous versified commentaries upon the Divine Comedy—in the *terza rima* abstracts of Boson da Gubbio, Jacopo Alighieri, Saviozzo da Siena, and Boccaccio.[1]

Tuscan politics are treated from the Guelf point of view in Sacchetti's odes upon the war with Pisa, upon the government of Florence after 1378, and against the cowardice of the Italians.[2] His conception of a burgher's duties, the ideal of Guelf *bourgeoisie* before Florence had become accustomed to tyrants, finds expression in a sonnet—*Amar la patria*.[3] We frequently meet with the word *Comune* on his lips :

> O vuol rè o signore o vuol comune,
> Chè per comune dico ciò ch' io parlo.

A like note of municipal independence is sounded in the poems of Antonio Pucci, and in the admonitory stanzas of Matteo Frescobaldi.[4] Considerable interest attaches to these political compositions for the light they throw on party feeling at the close of the heroic age of Italian history. The fury with which those factions raged, prompts the bards of either camp to curses. I may refer to this passage from Folgore da San Gemignano, when he sees the Ghibelline Uguccione triumphant over Tuscany :[5]

[1] *Cino, etc.* pp. 202, 211, 573, 390. [2] *Ibid.* pp. 504, 535, 498.

[3] In the Discourse of Monsignor Giov. Bottari, Section vi., printed before Sacchetti's *Novelle*.

[4] *Cino, etc.* pp. 445–474, 258–263.

[5] Navone's edition (Bologna, Romagnoli, 1880), p. 56. The date of this sonnet must be about 1315. We have to choose between placing Folgore in that century or assigning the sonnet to some anonymous author. See Appendix ii. for translations.

Eo non ti lodo Dio e non ti adoro,
E non ti prego e non ti ringrazio,
E non ti servo ch' io ne son più sazio
Che l' aneme de star en purgatoro ;
Perchè tu ai messi i Guelfi a tal martoro
Ch' i Ghibellini ne fan beffe e strazio,
E se Uguccion ti comandasse il dazio,
Tu 'l pagaresti senza peremptoro !

Yet neither in the confused idealism of the Ghibellines nor in the honest independence of the Guelfs lay the true principle of national progress. Sinking gradually and inevitably beneath the sway of despots, the Italians in the fifteenth century were destined to become a nation of scholars, artists, *litterati*. The age of Dante, the uncompromising aristocrat, was over. The age of Boccaccio, the easy-going *bourgeois*, had begun. The future glories of Italy were to be won in the field of culture ; and all the hortatory lyrics I have mentioned, exerted but little influence over the development of a spirit which was growing quietly within the precincts of the people. The Italian people at this epoch cared far less for the worn-out factions of the Guelfs and Ghibellines than for home-comforts and tranquillity in burghese occupations. The keener intellects of the fifteenth century were already so absorbingly occupied with art and classical studies that there was no room left in them for politics of the old revolutionary type. Meanwhile the new intrigues of Cabinets and Courts were left to a class of humanistic diplomatists, created by the conditions of despotic government. Scarcely less ineffectual were the moral verses of Bambagiuoli and Cavalca, or the Petrarchistic imitations of Marchionne Torrigiani, Federigo

d' Arezzo, Coluccio Salutati, Roberto di Battifolle, and Bonaccorso da Montemagno.[1] The former belonged to a phase of medieval culture which was waning. The elegant but lifeless Petrarchistic school dragged on through the fifteenth century, culminating in the *Canzoniere* of Giusto de' Conti, a Roman, which was called *La bella mano.* The revival of their mannerism, with a fixed artistic motive, by Bembo and the purists of the sixteenth century, will form part of my later history of Renaissance literature.

One note is unmistakeable in all the poetry of these last *trecentisti.* It is a note of profound discouragement, mistrust, and disappointment. We have already heard it sounded by Sacchetti in his lament for Boccaccio. Boccaccio had raised it himself in two noble sonnets—*Apizio legge* and *Fuggit' è ogni virtù.*[2] It takes the shrillness of a threnody in Tedaldi's *Il mondo vile* and in Manfredi di Boccaccio's *Amico il mondo.*[3] The poets of that age were dimly conscious that a new era had opened for their country—an era of money-getting, despotism, and domestic ease. They saw the people used to servitude and sunk in common pleasures—dead to the high aims and imaginative aspirations of the past. The turbulence of the heroic age was gone. The men of the present were all *Vigliacchi.* And as yet both art and learning were but in their cradle. It was impossible upon the opening of the fifteenth century, in that crepuscular interval between two periods of splendour, to know what glories for Italy and for the world at large would

[1] *Cino, etc.* pp. 174–195, 420–441.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 418.
[3] *Ibid.* pp. 197, 198.

be produced by Giotto's mighty lineage and Petrarch's progeny of scholars. We who possess in history the vision of that future can be content to wait through a transition century. The men of the moment not unnaturally expressed the querulousness of Italy, distracted by her struggles of the past and sinking into somnolence. Cosimo de' Medici, the moulder of Renaissance Florence, was already born in 1389; and men of Cosimo's stamp were no heroes for poets who had felt the passions that moved Dante.

The Divine Comedy found fewer imitators than the *Canzoniere*; for who could bend the bow of Ulysses? Yet some poets of the transition were hardy enough to attempt the Dantesque metre, and to pretend in a prosaic age that they had shared the vision of the prophets. Among these should be mentioned Fazio degli Uberti, a scion of Farinata's noble house, who lived and travelled much in exile.[1] Taking Solinus, the antique geographer, for his guide, Fazio produced a topographical poem called the *Dicta Mundi* or *Dittamondo*.[2]

From the prosaic matter of this poem, which resembles a very primitive Mappamondo, illustrated with interludes of history and excursions into mythological zoology, based upon the text of Pliny, and not unworthy of Mandeville, two episodes emerge and

[1] He was the author of the Ghibelline *Canzoni* quoted above.

[2] It was composed about 1360. I have seen two editions of this poem, *Opera di Faccio degli uberti Fiorentino, Chiamato Ditta Mundi, Volgare.* Impresso in Venecia per Christoforo di Pensa da Mondelo. Adi iiii. Setembrio MCCCCCI. The second is a version modernised in its orthography: *Il Dittamondo,* Milano, Silvestri, 1826. My quotations will be made from the second of these editions, which has the advantage of a more intelligible text.

arrest attention. One is the description of Rome—a sombre lady in torn raiment, who tells the history of her eventful past, describes her triumphs and her empire, and points to the ruins on her seven crowned hills to show how beautiful she was in youth [1]:

Ivi una dama scorsi;
Vecchia era in vista, e trista per costume.
Gli occhi da lei, andando, mai ton torsi;
Ma poichè presso le fui giunto tanto
Ch' io l' avvisava senza nessuh forsi,
Vidi il suo volto, ch' era pien di pianto,
Vidi la vesta sua rotta e disfatta,
E roso e guasto il suo vedovo manto.
E con tutto che fosse così fatta,
Pur nell' abito suo onesto e degno
Mostrava uscita di gentile schiatta.
Tanto era grande, e di nobil contegno,
Ch' io diceva fra me: Ben fu costei,
E pare ancor da posseder bel regno.

Fazio addresses the mighty shadow with respectful sympathy. Rome answers in language which is noble through its simple dignity:

Non ti maravigliare s' io ho doglia,
Non ti maravigliar se trista piango,
Nè se me vedi in sì misera spoglia;
Ma fatti maraviglia, ch' io rimango,
E non divento qual divenne Ecuba
Quando gittava altrui le pietre e il fango.

The second passage of importance, more noticeable for a sense of space and largeness than for its poetical expression, is a description of the prospect seen from Alvernia, that high station of the 'topless Apennines,' where S. Francis took the Stigmata, and where Dante

[1] Lib. i., cap. 2. Cp. Fazio's Ode on Rome, above, p. 160.

sought a home in the destruction of his earthly hopes [1] :

Noi fummo sopra il sasso dell Alverna
Al faggio ove Francesco fue fedito
Dal Serafin quel dì ch' ei più s'interna.
Molto è quel monte devoto e romito,
Ed è sì alto che il più di Toscana
Mi disegnò un frate col suo dito.
Guarda, mi disse, al mare, e vedi piana
Con altri colli la maremma tutta
Dilettevole molto e poco sana.
Ivi è Massa, Grosseto e la distrutta
Città vecchia, ed ivi Populonia
Ch' appena pare, tanto è mal condutta.

The whole of Tuscany and Umbria, their cities, plains, rivers and mountain summits, are unrolled; and the friar concludes with a sentence which well embodies the feeling we have in gazing over an illimitable landscape :

Io so bene che quanto t' ho mostrato,
La vista nol discerna apertamente,
Per lo spazio ch' è lungo dov' io guato :
Ma quando l' uom che bene ascolta e sente,
Ode parlar di cosa che non vede,
Immagina con l'occhio della mente.

Such value as the *Dittamondo* may still retain for students, it owes partly to the author's enthusiasm for ancient Rome, and partly to the sympathy with nature he had acquired during his wandering as an exile over the sacred soil of Italy.

Another poem of Dantesque derivation was the *Quadriregio* of Federigo Frezzi, Bishop of Foligno.[2]

[1] Lib. iii. cap. 9.

[2] *Libro chiamato Quatriregio del Decorso de la Vita Humana in Terza Rima*, Impresso in Venetia del MCCCCCXI a di primo di Decembrio. There is, I believe, a last century Foligno reprint of the *Quadriregio*; but I have not seen it.

It is an allegorical account of human life; and the four regions, which give their name to the book, are the realms of Love, Satan, Vice and Virtue.[1] To cast the moralisations of the middle ages in a form imitated from Dante, after Dante had already condensed the ethics and politics, the theology and science of his century in the Divine Comedy, was little less than a hopeless task. Nor need a word be spent upon the *Quadriregio*, except by way of illustrating the peculiar conditions of the poetic art, here upon the border-land between the middle age and the Renaissance. Federigo Frezzi was intent on depicting the victories of virtue over vice, and on explaining the advantage offered to the Christian by grace. Yet he chose a mythological framework for his doctrine. Cupid, Venus and Minerva are confused with Satan, Enoch and Elijah. Instead of Eden there is the golden age. Nymphs of Diana, Juno, and the like, are used as emblems. Pallas discourses about Christ, and expounds the Christian system of redemption. The earthly Paradise contains Helicon, with all the antique poets. Jupiter is contrasted with Satan. It is the same blending of antique with Christian motives which we note in the Divine Comedy; but the tact of the great artist is absent, and the fusion becomes grotesque. After reading through the poem we lay it down with the same feeling as that produced in us by studying some pulpit of the Pisan School, where a Gothic Devil, all horns and hoofs and grinning jaws,

[1] 'Regno di Dio Cupido,' 'Regno di Sathan,' 'Regno delli Vitii,' 'Regno della Dea Minerva e di Virtù.'

squats cheek by jowl with a Madonna copied from a Roman tomb. The following description of Cupid recalls the manner of the Sienese *frescanti*[1]:

Appena questo priego havea io decto
quando egli apparve ad me fresco et giocondo,
in un giardino ove io stava solecto.
Di mirto coronato il capo biondo
in forma pueril con si bel viso
che mai piu bel fu visto in questo mondo.
Creso haverai che su del paradiso
fusse el suo aspecto, tanto era sovrano,
se non che quando a lui mirai fiso
Vidi che haveva uno archo orato in mano
col quale Achille et Hercole percosse.

Here is a picture of the Golden Age, transcribed from Latin poetry, much as it was destined to control the future of Italian fancy[2]:

Vergine saggia e bella el ciel adorna
di cui Virgilio poetando scripse,
nuova progenie al mondo dal ciel torna,
Rexe già el mondo et si la gente visse
socto lei in pace che la età dell oro
et seculo giusto et beato si disse.
La terra allora senza alcun lavoro
dava li fructi, et non faceva spine,
ne ancho al giogo si domava el thoro;
Non erano divisi per confine
anchora i campi, et nesun per guadagno
cercava le contrade pelegrine;
Ognuno era fratello, ognun compagno,
et era tanto amor, tanta pietade,
che ad un fonte bevea el lupo et l' agno;
Non eran lancia, non erano spade,
non era anchor la pecunia peggiore
che 'l guerigiante ferro piu si fiade;
La invidia allor vedendo tanto amore
di questo bene ad sè genero pene
e desto gaudio ad se diede dolore.

[1] Lib. i. cap. 1.

[2] Lib. ii. cap. 2.

A little while beyond this foretaste of the *cinque cento*, we find Charon copied, without addition, but with a fatal loss of poetry, from the *Inferno* [1]:

Vidi Caron non molto da lontano
con una nave in mezo la tempesta,
che conducea con un gran remo in mano:
Et ciaschuno occhio chelli havea in testa,
pareva come di nocte una lumiera,
o un falo quando si fa per festa.
Quando egli fu appresso alla riviera
un mezo miglio quasi o poco mancho,
scacci sua faccia grande vizza e nera.
Egli havea el capo di canuti biancho,
el manto adosso rapezato et uncto,
el volto si crudel non vidi un quancho.

Last upon the list of Dantesque imitators stands Matteo Palmieri, a learned Florentine, who composed his *Città di Vita* in the middle of the fifteenth century. This poem won for its author from Marsilio Ficino the title of *Poeta Theologicus*.[2] Its chief interest at the present time is that the theology expressed in it brought suspicion of heresy on Palmieri. He held Origen's opinion that the souls of men were rebel angels. How a doctrine of this kind could be rendered in painting is not clear. Yet Giorgio Vasari tells us that a picture executed for Matteo Palmieri by Sandro Botticelli, which represented the Assumption of the Virgin into the celestial hierarchy—Powers, Princedoms, Thrones and Dominations ranged around her in concentric circles—fell under the charge of heterodoxy. The altar in S. Pietro Maggiore where it was placed had to be interdicted, and the picture

[1] Lib. ii. cap. 7.

[2] See *Ficini Epistolæ*, 1495, folio 17. If possible, I will insert some further notice of Palmieri's poem in an Appendix.

veiled from sight.[1] The story forms a curious link between this last scion of mediæval literature and the painting of the Renaissance. After Palmieri the metre of the Divine Comedy was chiefly used for satire and burlesque. Lorenzo de' Medici adapted its grave rhythms to parody in *I Beoni*. Berni used it for the Capitoli of the *Pesche* and the *Peste*. At Florence it became the recognised metre for obscene and frivolous compositions, which delighted the Academicians of the sixteenth century. The people, meanwhile, continued to employ it in *Lamenti*, historical compositions, and personal Capitoli.[2] Thus Cellini wrote his poem called *I Carceri* in *terza rima*, and Giovanni Santi used it for his precious but unpoetical Chronicle of Italian affairs. Both Benivieni and Michelangelo Buonarroti composed elegies in this metre; and numerous didactic eclogues of the pastoral poets might be cited in which it served for analogue to Latin elegiacs. In the *Sacre Rappresentazioni* it sometimes interrupted *ottava rima*, on the occasion of a set discourse or sermon.[3] Both Ariosto and Alamanni employed it in their satires. From these brief notices it will be seen that *terza rima* during the Renaissance period was reserved for dissertational, didactic and satiric themes, the Capitoli of the burlesque poets being parodies of grave scholastic lucu-

[1] See Vasari (Lemonnier, 1849), vol. v. p. 115, and note. This work by Botticelli is now in England.

[2] I may refer curious readers to two *Lamenti* of Pre Agostino, condemned to the cage or *Chebba* at Venice for blasphemy. They are given at length by Mutinelli, *Annali Urbani di Venezia*, pp. 352–356.

[3] For instance, 'Un Miracolo di S. M. Maddalena,' in D'Ancona's *Sacre Rappr.* vol i. p. 397.

brations. But no one now attempted an heroic poem in this verse.[1]

To give a full account of Italian prose during this period of transition from the middle age to the Renaissance is not easy. At the close of the fourteenth century, S. Catherine of Siena sustained the purity and 'dove-like simplicity' of the earlier *trecento* style, with more of fervour and personal power than any subsequent writer. Her letters, whether addressed to Popes and princes on the politics of Italy, or dealing with private topics of religious experience, are models of the purest Tuscan diction.[2] They have the garrulity and over-unctuous sweetness of the *Fioretti* and *Leggende*. But these qualities, peculiar to mediæval piety among Italians, are balanced by untutored eloquence which borders on sublimity. Without deliberate art or literary aim, the spirit of a noble woman speaks from the heart in Catherine's letters. The fervour of her feeling suggests poetic imagery. The justice of her perception dictates weighty sentences. The intensity with which she realises the unseen world of spiritual emotion, gives dramatic movement to her exhortations, expositions and entreaties. These rare excellences of a style, where spontaneity surpasses artifice, are combined in the

[1] It would be an interesting study to trace the vicissitudes of *terza rima* from the *Paradiso* of Dante, through the *Quadriregio* and *Dittamondo*, to Lorenzo de' Medici's *Beoni* and La Casa's *Capitolo del Forno*. In addition to what I have observed above, it occurs to me to mention the semi-popular *terza rima* poems in Alberti's *Accademia Coronaria* (Bonucci's edition of Alberti, vol. i. pp. clxxv. *et seq.*) and Boiardo's comedy of *Timone*. Both illustrate the didactic use of the metre.

[2] *Le Lettere di S. Caterina da Siena*, Firenze, Barbèra, 1860. Edited and furnished with a copious commentary by Niccolo Tommaseo. Four volumes.

famous epistle to her confessor, Raimondo da Capua, describing the execution of Niccolò Tuldo.[1] He was a young man of Perugia, condemned to death for some act of insubordination. Catherine visited him in prison, and induced him to take the Sacrament with her for the first time. He besought her to be present with him at the place of execution. Accordingly she waited for him there, praying to Mary and to Catherine, the virgin saint of Alexandria, laying her own neck upon the block, and entering into harmony so rapt with those celestial presences that the multitude of men who were around her disappeared from view. What followed, must be told in her own words:

Poi egli giunse, come uno agnello mansueto: e vedendomi, cominciò a ridere; e volse che io gli facesse il segno della croce. E ricevuto il segno, dissi io: 'Giuso! alle nozze, fratello mio dolce! chè tosto sarai alla vita durabile.' Posesi quì con grande mansuetudine; e io gli distesi il collo, e chinàmi giù, e rammentàlli il sangue dell' Agnello. La bocca sua non diceva se non, Gesù, e, Catarina. E, così dicendo, ricevetti il capo nelle mani mie, fermando l' occhio nella divina bontà e dicendo: 'Io voglio.'

Allora si vedeva Dio-e-Uomo, come si vedesse la chiarità del sole; e stava aperto, e riceveva il sangue; nel sangue suo uno fuoco di desiderio santo, dato e nascosto nell' anima sua per grazia; riceveva nel fuoco della divina sua carità. Poichè ebbe ricevuto il sangue e il desiderio suo, ed egli ricevette l'anima sua, la quale mise nella bottiga aperta del costato suo, pieno di misericordia; manifestando la prima Verità, che per sola grazia e misericordia egli il riceveva, e non per veruna altra operazione. O quanto era dolce e inestimabile a vedere la bontà di Dio!

The sudden transition from this narrative of fact to the vision of Christ—from the simple style of ordinary speech to ecstasy inebriated with the cross—is managed with a power that truth alone could yield.

[1] *Op. cit.* vol. iv. pp. 5–12.

A dramatist might have conceived it; but only a saint who lived habitually in both worlds of loving service and illumination, could thus have made it natural. This is the noblest and the rarest realism.

If we trust the testimony of contemporary chroniclers, S. Bernardino of Siena in the pulpit shared Catherine's power of utterance, at once impressive and simple.[1] No doubt the preachers of the *quattrocento* were influential in maintaining a tradition of prose rhetoric. But it is not in the nature of sermons, even when ably reported, to preserve their fulness and their force. Not less important for the formation of a literary style were the letters and despatches of ambassadors. Though at this period all ceremonial orations, briefs, state documents and epistles between Courts and commonwealths were composed in Latin, still the secret correspondence of envoys with their home governments gave occasion for the use of the vernacular; and even humanists expressed their thoughts occasionally in the mother tongue. Coluccio Salutati, for example, whose Latin letters were regarded as models of epistolary style, employed Italian in less formal communications with his office. These early documents of studied Tuscan writing are now more precious than his formal Ciceronian imitations. Private letters may also be mentioned among the best sources for studying the growth of Italian prose, although we have not much material to judge by.[2]

[1] See, for example, the passages from Graziani's *Chronicle of Perugia* quoted by me in Appendix iv. to *Age of the Despots*.

[2] See *Alcune Lettere familiari del Sec. xiv*, Bologna, Romagnoli, 1868. This collection contains letters by Lemmo Balducci (1333–1389), Filippo dell' Antella (*circa* 1398), Dora del Bene, Lanfredino Lanfredini

The correspondence of Alessandra degli Strozzi, recently edited by Signor Cesare Guasti, is not only valuable for the light it casts upon contemporary manners, but also for the illustration of the Florentine idiom as written by a woman of noble birth.[1] Of Poliziano's, Pulci's and Lorenzo de' Medici's letters I shall have occasion to speak in a somewhat different connection later on.

The historiographers of the Renaissance thought it below their dignity to use any language but Latin.[2] At the same time, vernacular annalists abounded in Italy, whose labours were of no small value in forming the prose-style of the *quattrocento*. After the Villani, Florence could boast a whole chain of writers, beginning with Marchionne Stefani, including Gino Capponi, the spirited chronicler of the Ciompi rebellion, and extending to Goro Dati in the middle of the fifteenth century. A little later, Giovanni Cavalcanti, in his Florentine Histories, proved how the simple diction of the preceding age was being spoiled by false classicism.[3] This work is doubly valuable—both as a record of the great Albizzi oligarchy and their final conquest by the Medici, and also as a monument of the fusion which was being made between the popular and humanistic styles. The chronicles of other Italian cities—Ferrara, Cremona, Rome, Pisa, Bologna, and even Siena—show less purity of language than the

(born about 1345), Coluccio Salutati (1330–1406), Giorgio Scali (died 1381), and Marchionne Stefani (died 1385).

[1] Alessandra Macinghi negli Strozzi, *Lettere di una Gentildonna Fiorentina del secolo xv*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1877.

[2] See *Revival of Learning*, chap. 4, and *Age of the Despots*, chap. 5.

[3] *Istorie Fiorentine scritte da Giov. Cavalcanti*, 2 vols. Firenze 1838,

Florentine.[1] Italian is often mixed with vulgar Latin, and phrases borrowed from unpolished local dialects abound. It was not until the close of the century that two great writers of history in the vernacular arose outside the walls of Florence. These were Corio, the historian of Milan, and Matarazzo, the annalist of Perugia.[2] In Corio's somewhat stiff and cumbrous periods we trace the effort of a foreigner to gain by study what the Tuscans owed to nature. Yet he never suffered this stylistic preoccupation to spoil his qualities as an historian. His voluminous narrative is a mine of accurate information, illustrated with vivid pictures of manners and carefully considered portraits of eminent men. Reading it, we cannot but regret that Poggio and Bruno, Navagero and Bembo, judged it necessary to tell the tales of Florence and of Venice in a pseudo-Livian Latin. The 'History of Milan' is worth twenty of such humanistic exercises in rhetoric. Matarazzo displays excellences of a different, but of a rarer order. Unlike Corio, he was not anxious to show familiarity with rules of Tuscan writing, or to build again the periods of Boccaccio's ceremonious style. His language bears the stamp of its Perugian origin. It is, at the same time, unaffectedly dramatic,

[1] Besides Muratori's great collection and the *Archivio Storico*, the Chronicles of Lombard, Umbrian, and Tuscan towns have been separately printed too voluminously for mention in a note.

[2] *L' Historia di Milano volgarmente scritta dall' eccellentissimo oratore M. Bernardino Corio*, in Vinegia, per Giovan Maria Bonelli, MDLIIII. 'Cronaca della Città di Perugia dal 1492 al 1503 di Francesco Matarazzo detto Maturanzio,' *Archivio Storico Italiano*, vol xvi. par. ii. Of Corio's History I have made frequent use in the *Age of the Despots*. It is a book that repays frequent and attentive reperusals. Those students who desire to gain familiarity at first hand with Renaissance life cannot be directed to a purer source.

and penetrated with the charm of a distinguished personality. No one can read the tragedy of the Baglioni in this wonderful romance without acknowledging that he is in the hands of a great writer. The limpidity of the *trecento* has here survived, and, blending with Renaissance enthusiasm for physical beauty and antique heroism, has produced a work of art unrivalled in its kind.[1]

Having advanced so far as to speak in this chapter of Corio and Matarazzo, I shall take occasion to notice a book which, appearing for the first time in 1476, may fairly be styled the most important work of Italian prose-fiction belonging to the fifteenth century. This is the *Novellino* of Masuccio Guardato, a nobleman of Salerno, secretary to the Prince Roberto Sanseverino, and resident throughout his life at the Court of Naples.[2] The *Novellino* is a collection of stories, fifty in number, arranged in five parts, which treat respectively of hypocrisy and the monastic vices, jealousy, feminine incontinence, the contrasts of pathos and of humour, and the generosity of princes. Each *Novella* is dedicated to a noble man or woman of Neapolitan society, and is followed by a reflective discourse, in which the author personally addresses his audience. Masuccio declares himself the disciple of Boccaccio and Juvenal.[3] Of the Roman poet's spirit he has plenty;

[1] In *Studies in Italy and Greece*, article 'Perugia,' I have dealt more at large with Matarazzo's Chronicle than space admits of here.

[2] *Il Novellino di Masuccio Salernitano.* Edited by Luigi Settembrini. Napoli, Morano, 1874.

[3] Introduction to Part iii. *op. cit.* p. 239. 'Cognoscerai i lasciati vestigi del vetusto satiro Giovenale, e del famoso commendato poeta Boccaccio, l' ornatissimo idioma e stile del quale ti hai sempre ingegnato de imitare.'

for he gives the rein to rage in language of the most indignant virulence. Of Boccaccio's idiom and style, though we can trace the student's emulation, he can boast but little. Masuccio never reached the Latinistic smoothness of his model; and while he wrote Italian, his language was far from being Tuscan. Phrases culled from southern dialects are frequent; and the structure of the period is often ungrammatical. Masuccio was not a member of any humanistic clique. He lived among the nobles of a royal Court, and knew the common people intimately. This double experience is reflected in his language and his modes of thought. Both are unalloyed by pedantry, and precious for the student of contemporary manners.

The interest of the *Novellino* is great when we regard it as the third collection of *Novelle*, coming after Boccaccio's and Sacchetti's, and, from the point of view of art, occupying a middle place between them. The tales of the Decameron were originally recited at Naples; and though Boccaccio was a thorough Tuscan, he borrowed something from the south which gave width, warmth and largeness to his writing. Masuccio is wholly Neapolitan in tone; but he seeks such charm of presentation and variety of matter as shall make his book worthy to take rank in general literature. Sacchetti has more of a purely local flavour. He is no less Florentine than Masuccio is Neapolitan; and, unlike Masuccio, he has taken little pains to adapt his work to other readers than his fellow-citizens. Boccaccio embraces all human life, seen in the light of vivid fancy by a *bourgeois* who was also a great comic and romantic poet. Sacchetti describes the *borghi*,

contrade, and *piazze* of Florence; and his speech is seasoned with rare Tuscan salt of wit. Masuccio's world is that of the free-living southern noble. He is penetrated with aristocratic feeling, treats willingly of arms and jousts and warfare, telling the tales of knights and ladies to a courtly company.[1] At the same time, the figures of the people move with incomparable vivacity across the stage; and his transcripts from life reveal the careless interpenetration of classes to which he was accustomed in Calabria.[2] Some of his stories are as simply *bourgeois* as any of Sacchetti's.[3]

When we compare Masuccio with Boccaccio we find many points of divergence, due to differences of temperament, social sympathies and local circumstance. Boccaccio is witty and malicious; Masuccio humorous and poignant. Boccaccio laughs indulgently at vices; Masuccio scourges them. Boccaccio makes a jest of superstition; Masuccio thunders against the hypocrites who bring religion into contempt. Boccaccio turns the world round for his recreation, submitting its follies to the subtle play of analytical fancy. Masuccio is terribly in earnest; whether sympathetic or vituperative, he makes the voice of his heart heard. Boccaccio's pictures are toned with a rare perception of harmony and delicate gradation. Masuccio brings what strikes his sense before us by a few firm touches. Boccaccio

[1] For an instance of Masuccio's feudal feeling, take this. A knight kills a licentious friar—'alquanto pentito per avere le sue possenti braccia con la morte di un Fra Minore contaminato' (*op. cit.* p. 13). It emerges in his description of the Order of the Ermine (*ibid.* p. 240). It is curious to compare this with his strong censure of the point of honour (pp. 388, 389) in a story which has the same blunt sense as Ariosto's episode of Giocondo. The Italian here prevails over the noble.

[2] See especially *Nov* xi. and xxxviii. [3] *Nov.* ii. iii. v. xi. xviii. xxix.

shows far finer literary tact. Yet there is something in the unpremeditated passion, pathos, humour, grossness, anger and enjoyment of Masuccio—a chord of masculine and native strength, a note of vigorous reality—that arrests attention even more imperiously than the prepared effects of the Decameron. One point of undoubted excellence can be claimed for Masuccio. He was a great tragic artist in the rough, and his comedy displays an uncouth Rabelaisian realism. The lights and shadows cast upon his scene are brusque—like the sunlight and the shadow on a Southern city; whereas the painting of Boccaccio is distinguished by exquisite blendings of colour and chiaroscuro in subordination to the chosen key.

Masuccio displays his real power in his serious *Novelle*, when he gives vent to his furious hatred of a godless clergy, or describes some dreadful incident, like the tragedy of the two lovers in the lazar-house.[1] Scarcely less dramatic are his tales of comic sensuality.[2] Nor has he a less vivid sense of beauty. Some of his occasional pictures—the meeting of youths and maidens in the evening light of Naples; the lover who changed his jousting-badge because his lady was untrue; the tournament at Rimini; the portrait of Eugenia disguised as a *ragazzo de omo d' arme*—break upon us with the freshness of a smile or sunbeam.[3]

[1] *Nov.* xxxi.—Masuccio's peculiar animosity against the clergy may be illustrated by comparing his story of the friar who persuaded the nun that she was chosen by the Holy Ghost (*Nov.* ii.) with Boccaccio's tale of the Angel Gabriel. See, too, the scene in the convent (*Nov.* vi.), the comedy of S. Bernardino's sermon (*Nov.* xvi.), the love-adventures of Cardinal Roderigo Borgia.

[2] For example, *Nov.* vii. xiii. v.

[3] *Op. cit.* pp. 292, 282, 391, 379.

We might almost detect a vein of Spanish imagination in certain of his episodes—in the midnight ride of the living monk after the dead friar strapped upon his palfrey, and in the ghastly murder of the woman and the dwarf.[1] The lowest classes of the people are presented with a salience worthy of Velasquez—cobblers, tailors, prostitutes, preaching friars, miracle-workers, relic-mongers, bawds, ruffians, lepers, highway robbers, gondoliers, innkeepers, porters, Moorish slaves, the panders to base appetites and every sort of sin.[2] Masuccio felt no compunction in portraying vicious people as he knew them; but he reserved language of scathing vituperation for their enormities.[3]

From so much that is coarse, dreadful, and revolting, the romance of Masuccio's more genial tales detaches itself with charming grace and delicacy. Nothing in Boccaccio is lovelier than the story of the girl who puts on armour and goes at night to kill her faithless lover; or that of Mariotto and Giannozza, which is substantially the same as Romeo and Juliet; or that of Virginio Baglioni and Eugenia, surprised and slain by robbers near Brescia; or that of Marchetto and Lanzilao, the comrades in arms, which has points in common with Palamon and Arcite; or, lastly, that of the young Malem and his education by Giu-

[1] *Nov.* i. and xxviii. The second of these stories is dedicated to Francesco of Aragon, who, born in 1461, could not have been more than fifteen when this frightful tale of lust and blood was sent him. Nothing paints the manners of the time better than this fact.

[2] See *op. cit.* pp. 28, 68, 89, 141, 256, 273, 275, 380, 341, 343.

[3] For specimens of his invective read pp. 517, 273, 84, 275, 55, 65, 534. I have collected some of these passages, bearing on the clergy, in a note to p. 418 of my *Age of the Despots*, 2nd edition. No wonder that Masuccio's book was put upon the Index!

dotto Gambacorto.[1] It is the blending of so many elements—the interweaving of tragedy and comedy, satire and pathos, grossness and sentiment, in a style of unadorned sincerity, that places Masuccio high among novelists. Had his language been as pure as that of the earlier Tuscan or the later Italian authors, he would probably rank only second to Boccaccio in the estimation even of his fellow-countrymen. A foreigner, less sensitive to niceties of idiom, may be excused for recognising him as at least Bandello's equal in the story-teller's art. In moral quality he is superior not only to Bandello, but also to Boccaccio.

The greatest writer of Italian prose in the fifteenth century was a man of different stamp from Masuccio. Gifted with powers short only of the very highest, Leo Battista Alberti exercised an influence over the spirit of his age and race which was second to none but Lionardo's.[2] Sacchetti, Ser Giovanni, Masuccio, and the ordinary tribe of chroniclers pretended to no humanistic culture.[3] Alberti, on the contrary, was educated at Bologna, where he acquired the scientific knowledge of his age, together with such complete mastery of Latin that a work of his youth, the comedy *Philodoxius*, passed for a genuine product of antiquity. This man of many-sided genius came into the world too soon for the perfect exercise of his

[1] *Nov.* xxvii. xxxiii. xxxv. xxxvii. xlviii.

[2] See *Revival of Learning*, pp. 341–344, for some account of Alberti's life and place among the humanists; *Fine Arts*, p. 74, for his skill as an architect.

[3] Sacchetti, we have seen, called himself *uomo discolo*; Ser Giovanni proclaimed himself a *pecorone*; Masuccio had the culture of a nobleman; Corio and Matarazzo, if we are right in identifying the latter with Francesco Maturanzio, were both men of considerable erudition.

singular faculties. Whether we regard him from the point of view of art, of science, or of literature, he occupies in each department the position of precursor, pioneer and indicator. Always original and always fertile, he prophesied of lands he was not privileged to enter, leaving the memory of dim and varied greatness rather than any solid monument behind him.[1] Of his mechanical discoveries this is not the place to speak; nor can I estimate the value of his labours in the science of perspective.[2] It is as a man of letters that he comes before us in this chapter.

The date of Alberti's birth is uncertain. But we may fix it probably at about the year 1405. He was born at Venice, where his father, exiled with the other members of his noble house by the Albizzi, had taken refuge. After Cosimo de' Medici's triumph over the Albizzi in 1434, Leo Battista returned to Florence.[3] It was as a Florentine citizen that his influence in restoring the vulgar literature to honour, was destined to be felt. He did not, however, reside continuously

[1] The most charming monument of Alberti's memory is the Life by an anonymous writer, published in Muratori and reprinted in Bonucci's edition, vol. i. Bonucci conjectures, without any substantial reason, that it was composed by Alberti himself.

[2] For the *Camera Optica*, *Reticolo de' dipintori*, and *Bolide Albertiana*, see the Preface (pp. lxv.–lxix.) to Anicio Bonucci's edition of the *Opere Volgari di L. B. Alberti*, Firenze, 1843, five vols. All references will be made to this comprehensive but uncritical collection. Hubert Janitschek's edition of the Treatises on Art should be consulted for its introduction and carefully prepared text—Vienna, 1877, in the *Quellenschriften für Kunstgeschichte*.

[3] The sentence of banishment was first removed in 1428; but the rights of burghership were only restored to the Alberti in 1434. Leo Battista finished the Treatise on Painting at Florence, Sept. 7, 1435 (see Janitschek, *op. cit.* p. iii.), and dedicated it to Brunelleschi, July 17, 1436. From that dedication it would seem that he had only recently returned.

in the city of his ancestors, but moved from town to town, with a restlessness that savoured somewhat of voluntary exile. It is, indeed, noteworthy how many of the greatest Italians—Dante, Giotto, Petrarch, Alberti, Lionardo, Tasso: men who powerfully helped to give the nation intellectual coherence—were wanderers. They sought their home and saw their spiritual *patria* in no one abiding-place.[1] Thus, amid the political distractions of the Italian people, rose that ideal of unity to which Rome, Naples, Florence, Venice, Ferrara contributed, but which owned no metropolis. Florence remained to the last the brain of Italy. Yet Florence, by stepmotherly ingratitude, by Dante's exile, by the alienation of Petrarch, by Alberti's homeless boyhood, prepared for the race a new culture, Tuscan in origin, national by diffusion and assimilation. Alberti died at Rome in 1472, just when Poliziano, a youth of eighteen, was sounding the first notes of that music which re-awakened the Muse of Tuscany from her long sleep, and gave new melodies to Italy.

In his proemium to the Third Book of the *Family*, addressed to Francesco degli Alberti, Leo Battista enlarges on the duty of cultivating the mother tongue.[2] After propounding the question whether the loss of the empire acquired by their Roman ancestors—*l'antiquo nostro imperio amplissimo*—or the loss of Latin as a spoken language—*l' antiqua nostra gentilissima*

[1] A passage in the *Della Tranquillità dell' Animo* (*Op. Volg.* i. 35), shows how Alberti had lived into the conception of cosmopolitan citizenship. It may be compared with another in the *Teogenio* (*op. cit.* iii. 194) where he argues that love for one's country, even without residence in it, satisfies the definition of a citizen.

[2] *Op. cit.* ii. 215–221.

lingua latina—had been the greater privation to the Italian race, he gives it as his opinion that, though the former robbed them of imperial dignity, the latter was the heavier misfortune. To repair that loss is the duty of one who had made literature his study. If he desires to benefit his fellow-countrymen, he will not use a dead language, imperfectly comprehended by a few learned men, but will bend the idiom of the people to the needs of erudition. 'I willingly admit,' he argues, 'that the ancient Latin tongue is very copious and of beauty polished to perfection. Yet I do not see what our Tuscan has in it so hateful that worthy matter, when conveyed thereby, should be displeasing to us.' Pedants who despise their mother speech, are mostly men incapable of expressing themselves in the latter; 'and granted they are right in saying that the ancient tongue has undisputed authority, because so many learned men have employed it, the like honour will certainly be paid our language of to-day, if men of culture take the pains to purify and polish it.' He then declares that, meaning to be useful to the members of his house, and to bequeath a record of their ancient dignity to their descendants, he has resolved to choose the tongue in which he will be generally understood.

This proemium explains Alberti's position in all his Italian writings. Aiming at the general good, convinced that a living nation cannot use a dead language with dignity and self-respect, he makes the sacrifice of a scholar's pride to public utility, and has the sense to perceive that the day of erudite exclusiveness is over. No one felt more than Alberti the

greatness of the antique Roman race. No one was prouder of his descent from those patricians of the Commonwealth, who tamed and ruled the world. The memory of that Roman past, which turned the generation after Dante into a nation of students, glowed in Alberti's breast with more than common fervour.[1] The sonorous introduction to the first book of the *Family* reviews the glories of the Empire and the decadence of Rome with a pomp of phrase, a passion of eloquence, that stir our spirit like the tramp of legions waking echoes in a ruined Roman colonnade.[2] Yet in spite of this devotion to the past, Alberti, like Villani, felt that his Italians of the modern age had destinies and auspices apart from those of ancient Rome. He was resolved to make the speech of that new nation, heiress of the Latin name, equal in dignity to Cicero's and Livy's. What Rome had done, Rome's children should do again. But the times were changed, and Alberti was a true son of the Renaissance. He approached his task in the spirit of a humanist. His style is over-charged with Latinisms; his periods are cumbrous; his matter is loaded with citations and scholastic instances drawn from the

[1] Such phrases as *i nostri maggiori patrizii in Roma* (i. 37), *la quasi dovuta a noi per le nostre virtù da tutte le genti riverenzia e obbedienzia* (ii. 218), *nostri ottimi passati Itali debellarono e sotto averono tutte le genti* (ii. 9), might be culled in plenty. Alberti shows how deep was the Latin idealism of the Renaissance, and how impossible it would have been for the Italians to found their national self-consciousness on aught but a recovery of the past.

[2] Especially the fine passage beginning, 'Quello imperio maraviglioso senza termini, quel dominio di tutte le genti acquistato con *nostri latini auspici*, ottenuto colla *nostra industria*, amplificato con *nostre armi latine*' (ii. 8); and the apostrophe, 'E tu, Italia nobilissima, capo e arce di tutto l' universo mondo' (*ib.* 13).

repertories of erudition.[1] The *vivida vis* of inspiration fails. His work is full of reminiscences. The golden simplicity of the *trecento* yields to a studied effort after dignity of diction, culture of amplitude. Still the writer's energy is felt in massive paragraphs of powerful declamation. His eloquence does not degenerate into frothy rhetoric; and when he wills, he finds pithy phrases to express the mind of a philosopher and poet. That he was born and reared in exile accounts for a lack of racy Tuscan in his prose; and the structure of his sentences proves that he had been accustomed to think in Latin before he made Italian serve his turn.[2] Still, though for these and other reasons his works were not of the kind to animate a nation, they are such as still may be read with profit and with pleasure by men who seek for solid thoughts in noble diction.

Alberti's principal prose work, the *Trattato della Famiglia*, was written to instruct the members of his family in the customs of their ancestors, and to perpetuate those virtues of domestic life which he regarded as the sound foundation of a commonwealth. The first three books are said to have been composed within the space of ninety days in Rome, and the

[1] An example of servile submission to classical authority might be chosen from Alberti's discourse on Friendship (*Famiglia*, lib. iv. *op. cit.* ii. 415), where he adduces Sylla and Mark Antony in contradiction to his general doctrine that only upright conversation among friends can lead to mutual profit.

[2] Alberti's loss of training in the vernacular is noticed by his anonymous biographer (*op. cit.* i. xciv.). It will be observed by students of his writings that he does not speak of *la nostra italiana* but *la nostra toscana* (ii. 221). Again (iv. 12) *in lingua toscana* is the phrase used in his dedication of the Essay on Painting to Brunelleschi.

fourth added at a later period.[1] It is a dialogue, the interlocutors being relatives of the Alberti blood. Nearly all the illustrative matter is drawn from the biographies of their forefathers. The scene is laid at Padua, and the essay contains frequent allusions to their exile.[2] No word of invective against the Albizzi who had ruined them, no vituperation of the city which had permitted the expulsion of her sons, escapes the lips of any of the speakers. The grave sadness that tempers the whole dialogue, is marred by neither animosity nor passion. Yet though the *Family* was written in exile for exiles, the ideal of domestic life it paints, is Florentine.[3] Taken in its whole extent, this treatise is the most valuable document which remains to us from the times of the oligarchy, when Florence was waging war with the Visconti, and before the Medici had based their despotism upon popular favour. From its pages a tolerably complete history of a great commercial family

[1] The anonymous biographer says: 'Scripsit præterea et affinium suorum gratia, ut linguæ latinæ ignaris prodesset, patrio sermone annum ante trigesimum ætatis suæ etruscos libros, primum, secundum, ac tertium de Familia, quos Romæ die nonagesimo quam inchoârat, absolvit; sed inelimatos et asperos neque usquequaquam etruscos. . . . post annos tres, quam primos ediderat, quartum librum ingratis protulit' (*op. cit.* i. xciv. c.). It appears from a reference in Book ii. (*op. cit.* ii. xxviii.) that the Treatise was still in process of composition after 1438; and there are strong reasons for believing that Book iii., as it is now numbered, was written separately and after the rest of the dialogue.

[2] Note especially the passage in Book iii., *op. cit.* ii. 256, *et seq.*

[3] There is, I think, good reason to believe the testimony of the anonymous biographer, who says this Treatise was written before Alberti's thirtieth year; and if he returned to Florence in 1434, we must take the date of his birth about 1404. The scene of the *Tranquillità dell' Animo* is laid in the Duomo at Florence; we may therefore believe it to have been a later work, and its allusions to the *Famiglia* are, in my opinion, trustworthy.

might be extracted; and this study would form a valuable commentary on the public annals of the commonwealth during the earlier portion of the fifteenth century.[1]

The first book of the *Famiglia* deals with the

[1] The pedigree prefixed to the Dialogue in Bonucci's edition would help the student in his task. I will here cite the principal passages of importance I have noticed. In volume ii. p. 102, we find a list of the Alberti remarkable for literary, scientific, artistic, and ecclesiastical distinctions. On p. 124 we read of their dispersion over the Levant, Greece, Spain, France, England, Belgium, Germany, and the chief Italian towns. Their misfortunes in exile are touchingly alluded to with a sobriety of phrase that dignifies the grief it veils, in the noble passage beginning with p. 256. Their ancient splendour in the tournaments and games of Florence, when the people seemed to have eyes only for men of the Alberti blood, is described on p. 228; their palaces and country houses on p. 279. A list of the knights, generals, and great lawyers of the Casa Alberti is given at p. 346. The honesty of their commercial dealings and their reputation for probity form the themes of a valuable digression, pp. 204-206, where we learn the extent of their trade and the magnitude of their contributions to the State-expenses. On p. 210 there is a statement that this house alone imported from Flanders enough wool to supply the cloth-trade, not only of Florence, but also of the larger part of Tuscany. The losses of a great commercial family are reckoned on p. 357; while p. 400 supplies the story of one vast loan of 80,000 golden florins advanced by Ricciardo degli Alberti to Pope John. The friendship of Piero degli Alberti contracted with Filippo Maria Visconti and King Ladislaus of Naples is described in the autobiographical discourse introduced at pp. 386–399. This episode is very precious for explaining the relation between Italian princes and the merchants who resided at their courts. Their servant Buto, p. 375, should not be omitted from the picture; nor should the autobiographical narrative given by Giannozzo of his relation to his wife (pp. 320–328) be neglected, since this carries us into the very centre of a Florentine home. The moral tone, the political feeling, and the domestic habits of the house in general must be studied in the description of the Casa, Bottega, and Villa, the discourses on education, and the discussion of public and domestic duties. The commercial aristocracy of Florence lives before us in this Treatise. We learn from it to know exactly what the men who sustained the liberties of Italy against the tyrants of Milan thought and felt, at a period of history when the old fabric of medieval ideas had broken down, but when the new Italy of the Renaissance had not yet been fully formed. If, in addition to the *Trattato della Famiglia*, the letters addressed by Alessandra Macinghi negli Strozzi to her children in exile be included in such a study, a vivid picture

duties of the elder to the younger members of the household, and the observance owed by sons and daughters to their parents. It is an essay *De Officiis* within the circle of the home, embracing minute particulars of conduct, and suggesting rules for education from the cradle upwards.[1] The second book takes up the question of matrimony. The respective ages at which the sexes ought to marry, the moral and physical qualities of a good wife, the maintenance of harmony between a wedded couple, their separate provinces and common duty to the State in the procreation of children, are discussed with scientific completeness. The third book, modelled on the *Œconomicus* of Xenophon, is devoted to thrift. How to use our personal faculties, our wealth, and our time to best advantage, forms its principal theme. The fourth book treats of friendship—family connections and alliances, the usefulness of friends in good and evil fortune, the mutual benefits enjoyed by men who live honestly together in a social state.[2] It may be seen

might be formed of the domestic life of a Florentine family.* These letters were written from Florence to sons of the Casa Strozzi at Naples, Bruges, and elsewhere between the years 1447 and 1465. They contain minute information about expenditure, taxation, dress, marriages, friendships, and all the public and personal relations of a noble Florentine family. Much, moreover, can be gathered from them concerning the footing of the members of the circle in exile. The private *ricordi* of heads of families, portions of which have been already published from the archives of the Medici and Strozzi, if more fully investigated, would complete this interesting picture in many of its important details.

[1] Notice the discussion of wet-nurses, the physical and moral evils likely to ensue from an improper choice of the nurse (*op. cit.* ii. 52–56).

[2] These topics of *Amicizia*, as the virtue on which society is based,

* *Lettere di una Gentildonna fiorentina*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1877.

from this sketch that the architecture of the treatise is complete and symmetrical. The first book establishes the principles of domestic morality on which a family exists and flourishes. The second provides for its propagation through marriage. The third shows how its resources are to be distributed and preserved. The fourth explains its relations to similar communities existing in an organised society. Many passages in the essay have undoubtedly the air of truisms; but this impression of commonplaceness is removed by the strong specific character of all the illustrations. Alberti's wisdom is common to civilised humanity. His conception of life is such as only suits a Florentine, and his examples are drawn from the annals of a single family.

I have already dwelt at some length in a former volume on the most celebrated section of this treatise —the *Padre di Famiglia* or the *Economico*.[1] To repeat those observations here would be superfluous. Yet I cannot avoid a digression upon a matter of much obscurity relating to the authorship of that book.[2] Until recently, this discourse upon the economy of a Florentine household passed under the name of Agnolo Pandolfini, and was published separately as his undoubted work. The interlocutors in the dialogue, which bore the title of *Governo della*

are further discussed in a separate little dialogue, *La Cena di Famiglia* (*op. cit.* vol. i.).

[1] *Age of the Despots*, pp. 218-222.

[2] In stating the question, and in all that concerns the MS. authority upon which a judgment must be formed, I am greatly indebted to the kindness of Signor Virginio Cortesi, who has placed at my disposal his unpublished Essay on the *Governo della Famiglia di Agnolo Pandolfini*. As the title of his work shows, he is a believer in Pandolfini's authorship.

Famiglia, are various members of the Pandolfini family, and all allusions to the Alberti and their exile are wanting. The style of the *Governo* differs in many important respects from that of Alberti; and yet the arrangement of the material and the substance of each paragraph are so closely similar in both forms of the treatise as to prove that the work is substantially identical. Pandolfini's essay, which I shall call *Il Governo*, passes for one of the choicest monuments of ancient Tuscan diction. Alberti's *Economico*, though it is more idiomatic than the rest of his *Famiglia*, betrays the Latinisms of a scholar. It is clear from a comparison of the two treatises either that Alberti appropriated Pandolfini's *Governo*, brought its style into harmony with his own, and gave it a place between the second and the fourth books of his essay on the Family; or else that this third book of Alberti's *Famiglia* was rewritten by an author who commanded a purer Italian. In the former case, Alberti changed the *dramatis personæ* by substituting members of his own house for the Pandolfini. In the latter case, the anonymous compiler paid a similar compliment to the Pandolfini by such alterations as obliterated the Alberti, and presented the treatise to the world as part of their own history. That Agnolo Pandolfini was himself guilty of this plagiarism is rendered improbable by a variety of circumstances. Yet the problem does not resolve itself into the simple question whether Pandolfini or Alberti was the plagiary. Supposing Alberti to have been the original author, there is no difficulty in believing that the *Governo* was a redaction made from his work by some anonymous

hand in honour of the Pandolfini family. On the contrary, if we assume Agnolo Pandolfini to have been the author, then Alberti himself was guilty of a gross and open plagiarism.[1]

It will be useful to give some account of the MSS. upon which the editions of the *Governo* and the *Economico* are based.[2] In the first edition of the *Governo* (Tartini e Franchi, Firenze, 1734) six codices are mentioned. Of these the Codex Pandolfini A, on which the editors chiefly relied, has been removed from Italy to Paris. The Codex Pandolfini B was written in 1476 at Poggibonsi by a certain Giuliano di Niccolajo Martini. Whether the Codex Pandolfini A professed to be an autograph copy, I do not know; but the editors of 1734, referring to it, state that the Senator Filippo Pandolfini, member of the Della Crusca, corrected the errors, restored the text, and improved the diction of the treatise by the help of a still more ancient MS. This admission on their part is significant. It opens, for the advocates of Alberti's authorship, innumerable suspicions as to the part played by Filippo Pandolfini in the preparation of the *Governo*. Nor can it be denied that the lack of an

[1] I use this word according to its present connotation. But such literary plagiarism was both more common and less disgraceful in the fifteenth century. Alberti himself incorporated passages of the *Fiammetta* in his *Deifira*, and Jacopo Nardi in his *Storia Fiorentina* appropriated the whole of Buonaccorsi's Diaries (1498–1512) with slight alterations and a singularly brief allusion to their author.

[2] Such information, as will be seen, is both vague and meagre. The MSS. of the *Governo* in particular do not seem to have been accurately investigated, and are insufficiently described even by Cortesi. Yet this problem, like that of the Malespini and Compagni Chronicles, cannot be set at rest without a detailed comparison of all existing codices.

autograph of the *Governo* renders the settlement of the disputed question very difficult.

Of Alberti's *Trattato della Famiglia* we have three autograph copies: (i) Cod. Magl. Classe iv. No. 38 in folio; (ii) Riccardiana 1220; (iii) Riccardiana 176. The first of these is the most important; but it presents some points of singularity. In the first place, the third book, which is the *Economico*, has been inserted into the original codex, and shows a different style of writing. In the second place the first two books contain numerous corrections, additions, erasures and recorrections, obviously made by Alberti himself. Some of the interpolated passages in the first two books are found to coincide with parts of the *Governo*; and Signor Cortesi, to whose critical Study I have already referred, argues with great show of reason that Alberti, when he determined to incorporate the *Governo* in his *Famiglia*, enriched the earlier books of that essay with fragments which he did not find it convenient to leave in their original place. Still it should be remembered that this argument can be reversed; for the anonymous compiler of the *Governo*, if he had access to Alberti's autograph, may have chosen to appropriate sentences culled from the earlier portions of the *Famiglia*.

It is noticeable that the *Economico*, even though it forms the third book of the Treatise on the Family, has a separate title and a separate introduction, with a dedication to Francesco Alberti, and a distinct peroration.[1] It is, in fact, an independent composition, and

[1] The anonymous biographer expressly states that the fourth book was written later than the other three, and dedicated to the one Alberti

occurs in more than one MS. of the fifteenth century detached from the rest of the *Famiglia*. In style it is far freer and more racy than is usual with Alberti's writing. Of this its author seems to have been aware; for he expressly tells his friend and kinsman Francesco that he has sought to approach the purity and simplicity of Xenophon.[1]

The anonymous writer of Alberti's life says that he composed three books on the Family at Rome before he was thirty, and a fourth book three years later. If we follow Tiraboschi in taking 1414 for the date of his birth, the first three books must have been composed before 1444 and the fourth in 1447. The former of these dates (1444) receives some confirmation from a Latin letter written by Leonardo Dati to Alberti, acknowledging the Treatise on the Family, in June 1443. Dati tells him that he finds fault with the essay for being composed 'in a more majestic and perhaps a harsher style, especially in the first book, than the Florentine language and the judgment of the laity would tolerate.' He goes on, however, to observe that 'afterwards the language becomes far more sweet and satisfactory to the ear'— a criticism which seems to suit the altered manner of the third book. With

who took any interest in the previous portion of the work. This, together with the isolation and more perfect diction of Book iii. is strong presumption in favour of its having been an afterthought.

[1] The *Œconomicus* of Xenophon served as common material for the *Economico* and the *Governo*, whatever we may think about the authorship of these two essays. Many parallel passages in Palmieri's *Vita Civile* can be referred to the same source. To what extent Alberti knew Greek is not ascertained; but even in the bad Latin translations of that age a flavour so peculiar as that of Xenophon's style could not have escaped his fine sense.

reference to the date 1447, in which the *Famiglia* may have been completed, Cortesi remarks that Pandolfini died in 1446. He suggests that, upon this event, Alberti appropriated the *Governo* and rewrote it, and that the *Economico*, though it holds the place of the third book in the treatise, is really the fourth book mentioned by the anonymous biographer. The suggestion is ingenious; and if we can once bring ourselves to believe that Alberti committed a deliberate act of larceny, immediately after his friend Pandolfini's death, then the details which have been already given concerning the autograph of the *Famiglia* and the discrepancies in its style of composition add confirmation to the theory. There are, however, good reasons for assigning Alberti's birth to the year 1404 or even 1402.[1] In that case Alberti's Roman residence would fall into the third decade of the century, and the last book of the *Famiglia* (which I am inclined to believe is the one now called the third) would have been composed before Pandolfini's death. That Alberti kept his MSS. upon the stocks and subjected them to frequent revision is certain; and this may account for one reference occurring in it to an event which happened in 1438.

Is it rational to adopt the hypothesis of Alberti's plagiarism? Let us distinctly understand what it implies. In his own preface to the *Economico* Alberti states that he has striven to reproduce the simple and intelligible style of Xenophon[2]; and there is no doubt that this portion of the *Famiglia*, whether we regard it as Alberti's or as Pandolfini's property,

[1] See *Op. Volg.* vol i. pp. lxxxvi.-lxxxviii. [2] *Op. Volg.* ii. p. 223.

was closely modelled on the *Œconomicus*. Cortesi suggests that the reference to Xenophon was purposely introduced by Alberti in order to put his readers off the scent. Nor, if we accept the hypothesis of plagiarism, can we restrict ourselves to this accusation merely. In the essay *Della Tranquillità dell' Animo* Alberti introduces Agnolo Pandolfini as an interlocutor, and makes him refer to the third book of the *Famiglia* as a genuine production of Alberti.[1] In other words, he must not only have appropriated Pandolfini's work, and laid claim to it in the preface to his *Economico*; but he must also have referred to it as his own composition in a speech ascribed to the real author, which he meant for publication. That is to say, he made the man whose work he stole pronounce its panegyric and refer it to the thief. That Pandolfini was dead when he committed these acts of treason would not be sufficient to explain Alberti's audacity; for according to the advocates of Pandolfini's authorship, the MS. formed a known and valued portion of his sons' inheritance. Is it *primâ facie* probable that Alberti, even in those days of looser literary copyright than ours, should have exposed himself to detection in so palpable and gross a fraud?

Before answering this question in the affirmative, it may be asked what positive grounds there are for crediting Pandolfini with the original authorship. At present no autograph of Pandolfini is forthcoming. His claim to authorship rests on tradition, and on the Pandolfini cast of the dialogue in certain MSS. At the same time, the admissions made by the editors

[1] *Cp. Volg.* i. 10.

of 1734 regarding their most trusted codex have been already shown to be suspicious. It is also noticeable that Vespasiano in his Life of Agnolo Pandolfini, though he professes to have been intimately acquainted with this excellent Florentine burgher, does not mention the *Governo della Famiglia*.[1] The omission is singular, supposing the treatise to have then existed under Pandolfini's name, for Vespasiano was himself a writer of Italian in an age when Latin scholarship claimed almost exclusive attention. He would, we should have thought, have been eager to name so distinguished a man among his fellow-authors in the vulgar tongue.

Granting the force of these considerations, it must still be admitted that there remain grave objections to accepting the *Economico* of Alberti as the original of these two treatises. In the first place, the *Governo* is a masterpiece of Tuscan; and it is far more reasonable to suppose that the *Economico* was copied from the *Governo* with such alterations as adapted it to the manner of the *Famiglia*, than to assume that the *Economico* received a literary rehandling which reduced it from its more rhetorical to a popular form. The passage from simple to complex in literature admits of easier explanation than the reverse process. Moreover, if Alberti admired a racy Tuscan style and could command it for the *Economico*, why did he not continue to use it in his subsequent compositions? In the second place, the *Governo*, as it stands, is suited to

[1] It should, however, be added that Vespasiano alludes to Pandolfini's habits of study and composition after his retirement to Signa. Yet he does not cite the *Governo*.

what Vespasiano tells us about Agnolo Pandolfini. He was a scholar trained in the humanities of the earlier Renaissance and a statesman who retired from public life, disgusted with the times, to studious leisure at his villa. Now, Giannozzo Alberti, who takes the chief part in the *Economico*, proclaims himself a man of business, without learning. Those passages of the *Governo* which seem inappropriate to such a character are absent from the *Economico*; but some of them appear in Alberti's other works, the *Teogenio* and *Della Tranquillità*. From this circumstance Signor Cortesi infers that Alberti, working with Pandolfini's essay before him, made such alterations as brought the drift of the discourse within the scope of Giannozzo's acquirements. The advocates of Alberti's authorship are bound to reverse this theory, and to assume that the author of the *Governo* suited the *Economico* to Pandolfini by infusing a tincture of scholarship into Giannozzo's speeches.[1]

We have still to ask who could the author of the *Governo*, if it was not Agnolo Pandolfini, have been? The first answer to this question is: Alberti himself. The anonymous biographer tells us that he wrote the first three books at Rome, and that he afterwards made great efforts to improve his Tuscan style and render it more popular. It is not, therefore, impossible that he should himself have fitted that portion of his *Famiglia* with new characters, omitted the

[1] It is clear that all this reasoning upon internal evidence can be turned to the advantage of both sides in the dispute. The question will have finally to be settled on external grounds (comparison of MSS.), combined with a wise use of such arguments from style as have already been cited

Alberti, and given the honours of the dialogue to Pandolfini. The treatise, as he first planned it (according to this hypothesis), has a passionate digression upon the exile of the Alberti, followed by a declamation against public life and politicians. To have circulated these passages in an essay intended for Florentine readers, after Alberti's recall by Cosimo de' Medici, would have been unwise. Alberti, therefore, may only have retained such portions of them as could rouse no animosity, revive no painful reminiscences, and be appropriately placed upon the lips of Pandolfini. As it stands in the *Governo*, the invective against statecraft is scarcely in keeping with Pandolfini's character. Though he retired from public life disgusted and ill at ease, the conclusion that no man should seek to serve the State except from a strict sense of duty, sounds strange when spoken by this veteran politician. Taken as the climax to the history of the wrongs inflicted upon the Alberti, this passage is dramatically in harmony with Giannozzo's experience.[1] With regard to the noticeable improvement of style in the *Economico*, we might argue that after Alberti had enjoyed facilities at Florence of acquiring his native idiom, he remodelled that section of his earlier work which he intended for the people. And the same line of argument would account for the independence of the *Economico* and its occurrence in separate MSS. Had Alberti designed what we now

[1] Anyhow, and whatever may have been the source of Alberti's *Economico*, the whole scene describing exile and winding up with the tirade against a political career, is a very noble piece of writing. If space sufficed, it might be quoted as the finest specimen of Alberti's eloquence. See *Op. Volg.* v. pp. 256–266.

call a plagiarism, what need was there to call attention to it by prefixing an introduction to the third book of a continuous treatise?

It is not, however, necessary to defend Alberti from the charge of fraud by suggesting that he was himself the author of the *Governo*. There existed, as we shall soon see, a class of semi-cultivated scribes at Florence, whose business consisted in manufacturing literature for the people. They re-wrote, re-fashioned, condensed, abstracted whatever seemed to furnish entertainment and instruction for their public. Their style was close to the vulgar speech and frankly idiomatic. That one of these men should have made the necessary alterations in the third book of the *Famiglia* to remove the recollection of the Alberti exile, and to prepare it for popular reading, is by no means impossible. The *Governo* is shorter and more condensed than the *Economico*. The rhetorical and dramatic elements are reduced; and the material is communicated in a style of gnomic pregnancy. If it was modelled upon the *Economico* in the way I have suggested, the writer of the abstract was a man of no common ability, with a very keen sense of language and a faculty for investing a work of art and fine literature with the *naïveté* and grace of popular style. He also understood the necessity of providing his chief interlocutor, Agnolo Pandolfini, with a character different from that of Giannozzo Alberti; and he had the tact to realise that character by innumerable touches. Great additional support would be given to this hypothesis, if we could trust Bonucci's assertion that he had seen and transcribed a MS. of the *Governo*

adapted with a set of characters selected from the Pazzi family. It would then seem clear that the *Governo* was an essay which every father of a family wished to possess for the instruction of his household, and to connect with the past history of his own race. Unluckily, Signor Bonucci, though he prints this Pazzi *rifacimento*, gives no information as to the source of the MS. or any hint whereby its existence can be ascertained.[1] We must, therefore, omit it from our reckoning.

As the case at present stands, it is impossible to form a decisive opinion regarding the authorship of this famous treatise. The necessary critical examination of MSS. has not yet been made, and the arguments used on either side from internal evidence are not conclusive. My own prepossession is still in favour of Alberti. I may, however, observe that after reading Signor Cortesi's inedited essay, I perceive the case in favour of Pandolfini to be far stronger than I had expected.[2]

Space will not permit a full discussion of Alberti's numerous writings; and yet their bearing on the best opinion of his time is so important that some notice of them must be taken. Together with the *Famiglia* we may class the *Deiciarchia*, or, as it should probably be written, the *De Iciarchia*.[3] This, like the majority of his moral treatises, is a dialogue, and its subject is civic

[1] See *Op. Volg.* Preface to vol. v.

[2] It is greatly to be desired that Signor Cortesi should print this *Studio Critico*, and, if possible, append to it an account of the MSS. on which Pandolfini's claims to be considered the original author rest.

[3] *Op. Volg.* vol. iii. The meaning of the title appears on p. 132, where the word *Iciarco* is defined *Supremo uomo e primario principe della famiglia sua.* It is a compound of οἶκος and ἀρχή.

virtue. Having formed the ideal family, he next considers the functions of householders, born to guide the State. The chief point of the discourse is that no one should be idle, but that all should labour in some calling worthy of the dignity of man.[1] This seems a simple doctrine; but it is so inculcated as to make us remember the Guelf laws of Florence, whereby *scioperati* were declared criminals. It must not, however, be supposed that Alberti confines himself to the development of this single theme. His *Deiciarchia* is rather to be regarded as a treatise on the personal qualities of men to whom the conduct of a commonwealth has been by accident of birth entrusted.

A second class of Alberti's dialogues discuss the contemplative life. In the *Famiglia* and the *Deiciarchia* man is regarded as a social and domestic being. In the *Tranquillità dell' Animo* and the *Teogenio* the inner life of the student and the sage comes under treatment. The former of these dialogues owes much of its interest to the interlocutors and to the scene where it was laid.[2] Leon Battista Alberti, Niccolò di Veri dei Medici, and Agnolo Pandolfini meet inside the Florentine Duomo, which is described in a few words of earnest admiration for its majesty and strength.[3] These friends begin a conversation, which soon turns upon the means of preserving the mind in repose and avoiding perturbations from the passions.

[1] See pp. 24, 28, 88, and the fine humanistic passage on p. 47, which reads like an expansion of Dante's *Fatti non foste per viver come bruti* in Ulysses' speech to his comrades.

[2] *Op. Volg.* vol. i.

[3] He calls it *il nostro tempio massimo* and speaks of *il culto divino*, pp. 7-9.

The three books are enriched with copious allusions to Alberti's works and personal habits—his skill as a musician and a statuary, the gymnastic feats of his youth, and his efforts to benefit the State by intellectual labour. They form a valuable supplement to the anonymous biography. The philosophical material is too immediately borrowed from Cicero and Seneca to be of much importance. The *Teogenio* is a more attractive, and, as it seems to me, a riper work.[1] Of Alberti's ethical discourses I am inclined to rate this next to the *Famiglia*; nor did the Italian Renaissance produce any disquisition of the kind more elevated in feeling, finer in temper, or glowing with an eloquence at once so spontaneous and so dignified. We have to return to Petrarch to find the same high humanistic passion; and Alberti's Italian is here more winning than Petrarch's Latin. Had Pico condescended to the vulgar tongue, he might have produced work of similar quality; for the essay on the Dignity of Man is written in the same spirit.

The *Teogenio* was sent with a letter of dedication to Lionello d' Este not long after his father's death.[2] Alberti apologises for its Italian style and assures the prince it had been written merely to console him in his evil fortunes. The speakers are two, Teogenio and Microtiro.[3] The dialogue opens with a passage on

[1] *Op. Volg.* vol. iii.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 160. This enables us to fix the date within certain limits. Niccolò III. of Este died 1441. Lionello died 1450. Alberti speaks of the essay as having been already some time in circulation. It must therefore have been written before 1440.

[3] Like Boccaccio, Alberti is fond of bad Greek etymologies. Perhaps we may translate these names 'the God-born' and 'the little pupil.' In the same dialogue Tichipedio seems to be 'the youth of fortune.'

friendship, and a somewhat laboured description of the grove where Teogenio intends to pass the day. Microtiro has come from the city. His friend, the recluse, welcomes him to the country with these words: 'Ma sediamo, se così ti piace, qui fra questi mirti, in luogo non men delizioso che vostri teatri e tempi amplissimi e sontuosissimi.' This strikes the keynote of the treatise, the theme of which is the superiority of study in the country over the distractions of the town. Reading it, we see how rightly Landino assigned his part to Alberti in the Camaldolese Discussions.[1] That ideal of rural solitude which the Italian scholars inherited from their Roman forefathers, receives its earliest and finest treatment in this dialogue. It is not communion with nature so much as the companionship of books and the pursuit of study in a tranquil corner of the Tuscan hills, that Alberti has selected for his panegyric.[2] 'The society of the illustrious dead,' he says in one of the noblest passages of the essay, 'can be enjoyed by me at leisure here; and when I choose to converse with sages, politicians or great poets, I have but to turn to my bookshelves, and my company is better than your palaces with all their crowds of flatterers and clients can afford.'[3] After enlarging on the manifold advantages of a student's life, he concludes the book with a magnificent picture of human frailty; leading up to a discourse on death.

It is noticeable that Alberti, though frequently approaching the subject of religion, never dilates upon

[1] See *Revival of Learning*, p. 339.
[2] *Op. Volg.* iii. 179.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 186.

it, and in no place declares himself a Christian. His creed is that of the Roman moralists—a belief in the benignant Maker of the Universe, an intellectual and unsubstantial theism. We feel this even in that passage of the *Famiglia* when Giannozzo and his wife pray in their bed-chamber to God for prosperity in life and happiness in children.[1] There is not a word about spiritual blessings, no allusion to Christ or Madonna, though a silver statue of the Saint with ivory hands and face is standing in his tabernacle over them[2]—nothing, indeed, to indicate that this grave Florentine couple, whom we may figure to ourselves like Van Eyck's merchant and wife in the National Gallery, were not performing sacrifice and praying to the *Di Lares* of a Roman household. The Renaissance had Latinised even the religious sentiments, and the elder faiths of the middle ages were extinct in the soundest hearts of the epoch.[3]

A third group of Alberti's prose works consists of his essays on the arts.[4] One of these, the Treatise on Painting, was either written in Italian or translated by Alberti soon after its composition in Latin.[5] The Treatises on Perspective, Sculpture, Architecture and the Orders are supposed to have been rendered by their author from the Latin; but doubt still rests upon Alberti's share in this translation. It is not my pre-

[1] *Op. Volg.* vol. ii. pp. 320–322.

[2] *Il Santo.* Probably S. John.

[3] Alberti in a Letter of Condolement to a friend (*Op. Volg.* v. 357) chooses examples from the Bible. Yet the tone of that most strictly pious of his writings is rather Theistic than Christian.

[4] *Op. Volg.* vol. iv. See, too, Janitschek's edition cited above.

[5] Bonucci believes it was composed in Italian. Janitschek gives reasons for the contrary theory (*op. cit.* p. iii.).

sent business to enquire into the subject-matter of his artistic essays, but rather to note the fact that Alberti should have thought it fitting to use Italian for at least the most considerable of them. We have already seen that his chief motive to composition was utility, and that he recognised the need of bringing the results of learning within the scope of the unlettered laity. We need not doubt that this consideration weighed with him when he rehandled the matter of Vitruvius and Pliny for the use of handicraftsmen. Nothing is more striking in the whole series than the business-like simplicity of style, the avoidance of rhetoric, and the adaptation of each section to some practical end. We have not here to do with æsthetical criticism, but with the condensed experience of a student and workman. In his exposition of theory Alberti corresponds to the practice of Florence, where Ghirlandajo kept a *bottega* open to all comers, and Michelangelo began his apprenticeship by grinding colours.

Though the subject of these essays lies beyond the scope of my work, it is impossible to pass over the dedication to Filippo Brunelleschi, which is prefixed to the Italian version of the *Pittura*. Alberti begins by saying that the wonder and sorrow begotten in him by reflecting on the loss of many noble arts and sciences, had led him to believe that Nature, wearied and out-worn, had no force left to generate the giant spirits of her youth. 'But when I returned from the long exile in which we of the Alberti have grown old, to this our mother-city, which exceeds all others in the beauty of her monuments, I perceived that many living men, but first of all you, Filippo, and our dear-

est friend the sculptor Donatello, and Lorenzo Ghiberti and Luca della Robbia and Masaccio, were not of less account for genius and noble work than any ancient artist of great fame.' After some remarks upon industry and the advantages of scientific theory, he proceeds: 'Who is there so hard and envious of temper as not to praise the architect Filippo, when he saw so vast a structure, raised above the heavens, spacious enough to cover with its shadow all the Tuscan folks, built without any aid from beams and scaffoldings, a miracle of art, if I judge rightly, which might in this age have been deemed impossible, and which even among the ancients was perhaps unknown, undreamed of?' After this exordium, he commits to Brunelleschi's care his little book on painting, *quale a tuo nome feci in lingua toscana.* The interest of this dedication lies not only in the mention of the five chief *quattrocento* artists by Alberti, and in the record of the impression first produced on him by Florence, but also in the recognition that, great as were the dead arts of antiquity, the modern arts of Italy could rival them. It is an intuition parallel to that which induced Alberti to compose the *Famiglia* in Italian, and proves that he could endure the blaze of humanism without blindness.

In the fourth group of Alberti's prose-works we come across a new vein of semi-moral, semi-satirical reflection. These are devoted to love and matrimony, giving rhetorical expression to the misogynistic side of the *Novelle.* Alberti professes himself a master in the lore of love. He knows its symptoms, diagnoses and describes the stages of the malady, and pretends to intimate acquaintance with the foibles of both sexes.

Yet we seem to feel that his knowledge is rather literary than real, derived from books and pranked with a scholastic show of borrowed learning. Two lectures, addressed by women to their own sex on the art of love, take the first place in this series. The one is called *Ecatomfila*, or the lady of the hundred loves; the other *Amiria*, or the lady of the myriad.[1] The former tells her female audience what kind of lover to choose, neither too young nor too old, not too rich nor yet too handsome; how to keep him, and in what way to make the most of the precious acquisition. She is comparatively modest, and the sort of passion she implies may pass for virtuous. Yet her large experience of men proves she has arrived at wisdom after many trials. Her virtue is a matter of prudent egoism. Amiria takes a different line. Heliogabalus might have used her precepts in his *Concio ad Meretrices*. Her discourse turns upon the subsidiary aids to beauty and the arts of coquetry. Recipes for hair-dyes, depilatories, eye-lotions, tooth-powders, soaps, lip-salves, ointments, cosmetics, skin-preservers, wart-destroyers, pearl-powders, rouges, are followed up with sound advice about craft, fraud, force, feigned passion, entangling manœuvres, crocodile tears, and secresy in self-indulgence. The sustained irony of this address, and the minute acquaintance with the least laudable secrets of an Italian lady's toilette it reveals, place it upon the list of literary curiosities. Did any human beings ever plaster their faces with such stuff as Amiria gravely recommends?[2]

[1] *Op. Volg.* vols. iii. and v.

[2] Passages in the plays of our own dramatists warn us to be careful

The *Deifira* is a dialogue on the cure of a distempered passion, which adds but little to Ovid's *Remedium Amoris*; while two short treatises on marriage only prove that Alberti took the old Simonidean view of there being at least nine bad women to one good one.[1] His misogyny, whether real or affected, reaches its climax in an epistle to Paolo Codagnello, which combines the worst things said by Boccaccio in the *Corbaccio* with Lucian's satire on female uncleanliness in the *Amores*.[2] The tirade appears to be as serious as possible, and, indeed, Alberti's generalities might be illustrated *ad libitum* from the *Novelle*. It is no wonder that women resented his treatment of them; and one of his most amusing lesser tracts is a dialogue between himself and a lady called Sofrona, who took him to task for this very epistle. In answer to her reproaches he is ceremoniously polite. He also gives her the last word in the argument, not without a stroke of humour. 'It is all very well of you, men of letters, to take our characters away, so long as we can rule our husbands and make choice of lovers when and how we choose. All you men run after us; and if you do but see a pretty girl, you

how we answer in the negative. But here are some specimens of Amiria's recipes (*op. cit.* v. 282). 'Radice di cocomeri spolverizzata, bollita in orina, usata più dì, lieva dal viso panni e rughe. Giovavi sangue di tauro stillato a ogni macula, sterco di colombe *in* aceto . . . insieme a sterco di cervio . . . lumache lunghe . . . sterco di fanciullo . . . sangue d'anguille.' All these things are recommended, upon one page, for spots on the skin. I can find nothing parallel in the very curious toilette book called *Gli Ornamenti delle Dame, scritti per M. Giov. Marinelli*, Venetia, Valgrisio, 1574.

[1] *Op. Volg.* vol. iii. 367; vol. i. 191, 215.

[2] *Op. Volg.* v. 233.

stand as stock still as a statue.'[1] After this fashion runs Sofrona's reply.

Alberti's misogynistic essays remind us how very difficult it is to understand or explain the tone of popular literature in that century with regard to women. That the *Novelle* were written to amuse both sexes seems clear; and we must imagine that the women who read so much vituperation of their manners, regarded it as a conventional play with words. Like Sofrona, they knew their satirists to be fair husbands, fathers, brothers, and, in the capacity of lovers, ludicrously blind to their defects. The current abuse of women, in which Petrarch no less than Alberti and Boccaccio indulged, seems to have been a scholastic survival of the coarse and ignorant literature of the medieval clergy. Cloistered monks indulged their taste for obscenity, and indemnified themselves for self-imposed celibacy, by grossly insulting the mothers who bore them and the institution they administered as a sacrament.[2] Their invective tickled the vulgar ear, and passed into popular literature, where it held its own as a commonplace, not credited with too much meaning by folk who knew the world.

The pretty story of Ippolito and Leonora, could we believe it to be Alberti's, might pass for a palinode to these misogynistic treatises.[3] It is the tale of two Florentine lovers, born in hostile houses, and brought, after a series of misadventures, to the fruition of

[1] *Op. Volg.* i. 236.

[2] I may refer to the Latin song against marriage, *Sit Deo gloria* (Du Méril; *Poésies Populaires Latines du Moyen Age*, pp. 179–187), for an epitome of clerical virulence and vileness on this topic.

[3] *Op. Volg.* iii. 274

honourable love in marriage. The legend must have been very popular. Besides the prose ver which the lovers are called Ippolito de' Buondelmonti and Leonora de' Bardi, we have a poem in *ottava rima*, where the heroine's name becomes Dianora. A Latin translation of the same novel was produced by Paolo Cortesi, with the title *Hyppolyti et Deyaniræ Historia*. But since Alberti's authorship has not been clearly proved, it is more prudent to class both Italian versions among those anonymous products of popular literature which will form the topic of my next chapter.

Of Alberti's poems few survive; and these have no great literary value. Out of the three serious sonnets, one beginning *Io vidi già seder* deserves to be studied for a certain rapidity of movement and mystery of emotion.[1] It might be compared to an allegorical engraving by some artist of the sixteenth century —Robeta or the Master of the Caduceus. Two burlesque sonnets in reply to Burchiello have this interest, that they illustrate a point of literary contact between the people and the cultivated classes. But, on the whole, the Sestines and the Elegy of Agiletta must be reckoned Alberti's best performances in verse.[2] Here his gnomic wisdom finds expression in pregnant, almost epigrammatic utterances. There are passages in the *Agiletta*, weighty with packed sentences, which remind an English reader of Bacon's lines on human life.[3] Still it is the poetry of a man largely gifted, but not born to be a singer. It may be worth

[1] *Op. Volg.* v. 352. [2] *Ibid.* pp. 355-359, 367-372.
[3] For example the lines beginning 'Sospetto e cure.' *Ibid.* p. 368.

adding to this brief notice of Alberti's rhymes, that he essayed Latin metres in Italian. The following elegiac couplet belongs to him [1]:

Questa per estremo miserabile epistola mando
A te che spregi miseramente noi.

It is not worth printing. But it illustrates that endeavour to fuse the forms of ancient with the material of modern art, which underlay Alberti's practical experiments in architecture.

It may seem that too much attention has already been given to Alberti and his works. Yet when we consider his peculiar position in the history of the Renaissance, when we remember the singular beauty of his character, and reflect that, first among the humanists of mark, he deigned to labour for the public and to cultivate his mother tongue, a certain disproportion in the space allotted him may be excused. What his immediate successors in the field of erudition thought of him, can be gathered from a passage in Poliziano's preface to the first edition of his work on Architecture.[2] 'To praise the author is beyond the narrow limits of a letter, beyond the poor reach of my powers of eloquence. Nothing, however abstruse in learning, however remote from the ordinary range of scholarship, was hidden from his genius. One might question whether he was better fitted for oratory or for poetry, whether his speech was the more weighty or the more polished.' These great qualities Alberti

[1] *Op. Volg.* i. lxv. He was not alone in this experiment. Barbarous Italian Sapphics and Hexameters are to be found in the *Accademia Coronaria* on Friendship, of which more in the next chapter.

[2] *De Re Ædificatoria*, Florence, 1485. This preface is a letter addressed to Lorenzo de' Medici.

placed freely at the service of the unlettered laity. He is therefore the hero of that age which I have called the period of transition.

In Alberti, moreover, we study the best type of the Italian intellect as it was moulded, on emergence from the middle ages, by those double influences of humanism and fine art which determined the Renaissance. Though his genius was rather artistic than scientific, all problems of nature and of man attracted him; and he dealt freely with them in the spirit of true modern curiosity. His method shows no trace either of mystical theology or of crooked scholasticism. He surveyed the world with a meditative but observant glance, avoiding the deeper questions of ontology, and depicting what he noticed with the realism of a painter. This powerful pictorial faculty made his sketches from contemporary life—the description of the gambler in the *Deiciarchia*; the portrait of the sage in the *Teogenio*; the domestic colloquies of Giannozzo with his wife in the *Famiglia*; the interior of a coquette's chamber in the *Amiria*—surprising for sincerity and fulness. As a writer, he has the same merit that we recognise in Masaccio and Ghirlandajo among the fresco-painters of that age. But Alberti's touch is more sympathetic, his humanity more loving.

He was not eminent as a metaphysician. From Plato he only borrowed something of his literary art, and something of ethical elevation, leaving to Ficino the mysticism which then passed for Platonic science. His ideal of the virtuous man is a Florentine burgher, honourable but keen in business, open

to culture of all kinds, untainted by the cynicism that marred Cosimo de' Medici, lacking the licentious traits of the *Novelle*. Alberti's Padre di Famiglia might have stepped from the walls of the Riccardi Chapel or the Choir of S. Maria Novella, in his grave red *lucco*, with the cold and powerful features. The life praised above all others by Alberti is the life of a meditative student, withdrawn from State affairs, and corresponding with men of a like tranquil nature. This ideal was realised by Sannazzaro in his Mergellina, by Ficino at Montevecchio, by Pico at Querceto. Just as his science and his philosophy were æsthetic, so were his religion and his morality. He conformed to the ceremonies of the Catholic Church. But the religious sentiment had already become in him rational rather than emotional, and less a condition of the conscience than of the artistic sensibility. Honour in men, honesty in women, moved his admiration because they are comely. The splendour of the stars, the loveliness of earth, raised him in thought to the supreme source of beauty. Whatever the genius of man brings to perfection of grace, he called divine, realising for the first time the piety that finds God in the human spirit.[1]

The harmonious lines and the vast spaces of the Florentine Duomo thrilled him like music, merging the charm of art in the high worship of a cultivated nature. 'This temple,' he writes in a passage that might be quoted as the quintessential exposition of his

[1] 'Quicquid ingenio esset hominum cum quâdam effectum elegantiâ, id prope divinum dicebat,' says the anonymous biographer. This sentence is the motto of humanism as elaborated by the artistic sense. Its discord with the religion of the middle ages is apparent.

mind,[1] 'has in it both grace and majesty, and I delight to notice that union of slender elegance with full and vigorous solidity, which shows that while every member is designed to please, the whole is built for perpetuity. Inside these aisles there is the climate of eternal spring—wind, frost, and rime without; a quiet and mild air within—the blaze of summer on the square; delicious coolness here. Above all things I delight in feeling the sweetness of those voices busied at the sacrifice, and in the sacred rites our classic ancestors called mysteries. All other modes and kinds of singing weary with reiteration; only religious music never palls. I know not how others are affected; but for myself, those hymns and psalms of the Church produce on me the very effect for which they were designed, soothing all disturbance of the soul, and inspiring a certain ineffable languor full of reverence toward God. What heart of man is so rude as not to be softened when he hears the rhythmic rise and fall of those voices, complete and true, in cadences so sweet and flexible? I assure you that I never listen in these mysteries and funeral ceremonies to the Greek words which call on God for aid against our human wretchedness, without weeping. Then, too, I ponder what power music brings with it to soften us and soothe.'

It would be difficult with greater spontaneity and truth to delineate the emotions stirred in an artistic nature by the services of a cathedral. It is the language, however, not of a devout Christian, but of one who, long before Goethe, had realised the

[1] *Op. Volg.* i. 8.

Goethesque ideal of 'living with fixed purpose in the Whole, the Good, the Beautiful.'

Alberti, both in his width of genius and in his limitations—in his all-embracing curiosity and aptitude for knowledge, his sensitiveness to every charm, his strong practical bias, the realism of his pictures, the objectivity of his style, his indifference to theology and metaphysic, the largeness of his love for all things that have grace, the substitution of æsthetical for moral standards, the purity of his taste, the tranquillity and urbanity of his spirit, his Stoic-Epicurean acceptance of the world where man may be content to dwell and build himself a home of beauty—was a true representative of his age. What attracts us in the bronze-work of Ghiberti, in the bas-reliefs of Della Robbia, in Rossellino's sleeping Cardinal di Portogallo, in Ghirlandajo's portraits and the airy space of Masaccio's backgrounds, in the lives of Ficino and Pomponio Leto, in the dome of Brunelleschi, in the stanzas of Poliziano, arrives at consciousness in Alberti, pervades his writing, and finds unique expression in the fragment of his Latin biography. Yet we must not measure the age of Cosimo de' Medici and Roderigo Borgia by the standard of Alberti. He presents the spirit of the fifteenth century at its very best. Philosophical and artistic sympathy compensate in his religion for that period's lack of pious faith. Its political degradation assumes in him the shape of a fastidious retirement from vulgar strife. Its lawlessness, caprice, and violence are regulated by the motto 'Nothing overmuch' which forms the keystone of his ethics. Its realism is tempered by his love for man and beast and tree—

that love which made him weep when he beheld the summer fields and labours of the husbandman. Its sensuality finds no place in his harmonious nature. Many defects of the century are visible enough in Alberti; but what redeemed Italy from corruption and rendered her capable of great and brilliant work amid the chaos of States ruining in infidelity and vice—that free energy of the intellect, open to all influences, inventive of ideas, creative of beauty, which ennobled her Renaissance—burned in him with mild and tranquil radiance.

This is perhaps the fittest place to notice a remarkable book, which, though it cannot be reckoned among the masterpieces of Italian literature, is too important in its bearing on the history of the Renaissance to be passed in silence. The *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, or 'Poliphil's Strife of Love in a Dream,' was written by Francesco Colonna, a Dominican monk, at Treviso in 1467.[1] There is some reason to conjecture that he composed it first in Latin;[2] but when it appeared in print in 1499, it had already assumed the garb of a strange maccaronic style, blending the euphuisms of affected rhetoric with phrases culled from humanistic pedantry. The base of the language professes to be Italian; but it is an Italian Latinised in all its elements, and interlarded with scraps of Greek and Hebrew. The following descrip-

[1] This we learn from the last words of the first edition, 'Tarvisii cum decorissimis Poliae amore lorulis distineretur misellus Poliphilus MCCCCLXVII.' The author's name is given in the initial letters to the thirty-eight chapters of the book.

[2] For this and other points about the *Hypnerotomachia* see Ilg's treatise *Ueber der Kunsthistorischen Werth der Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, Wien, Braunmüller, 1872.

tion of the Dawn, with which the book opens, may serve as a specimen of its peculiar dialect[1]:

Phoebo in quel hora manando, che la fronte di Matuta Leucothea candidava, fora gia dalle Oceane unde, le volubile rote sospese non dimonstrava. Ma sedulo cum gli sui volucri caballi, Pyroo primo, & Eoo alquanto apparendo, ad dipingere le lycophe quadrige della figliola di vermigliante rose, velocissimo inseguentila, non dimorava. Et coruscante gia sopra le cerulee & inquiete undule, le sue irradiante come crispulavano. Dal quale adventicio in quel puncto occidua davase la non cornuta Cynthia, solicitando gli dui caballi del vehiculo suo cum il Mulo, lo uno candido & laltro fusco, trahenti ad lultimo Horizonta discriminante gli Hemisperii pervenuta, & dalla pervia stella aricentare el di, fugata cedeva. In quel tempo quando che gli Rhiphaei monti erano placidi, ne cum tanta rigidecia piu lalgente & frigorifico Euro cum el laterale flando quassabondo el mandava gli teneri ramuli, & ad inquietare gli mobili scirpi & pontuti iunci & debili Cypiri, & advexare gli plichevoli vimini & agitare gli lenti salici, & proclinare la fragile abiete sotto gli corni di Tauro lascivianti. Quanta nel hyberno tempo spirare solea. Similmente el iactabondo Orione cessando di persequire lachrymoso, lornato humero Taurino delle sete sorore.

[1] It ought, however, to be said that, being the first paragraph of the whole book, its style is not so free and simple as in more level passages. Though I do not pretend to understand the meaning clearly, I subjoin a translation.—'Phœbus advancing at that moment, when the forehead of Matuta Leucothea whitened, already free from Ocean's waves, had not yet shown his whirling wheels suspense. But bent with his swift chargers, Pyrous first and Eous just disclosed to view, on painting the pale chariot of his daughter with vermeil roses, in most vehement flight pursuing her, made no delay. And sparkling over the azure and unquiet wavelets, his light-showering tresses flowed in curls. Upon whose advent at that point descending to her rest stayed Cynthia without horns, urging the two steeds of her carriage with the Mule, the one white and the other dark, drawing toward the furthest horizon which divides the hemispheres where she had come, and, routed by the piercing star who lures the day, was yielding. At that time when the Riphaean mountains were undisturbed, nor with so cold a gust the rigid and frost-creating east-wind with the side-blast blowing made the tender branches quake, and tossed the mobile stems and spiked reeds and yielding grasses, and vexed the pliant tendrils, and shook the flexible willows, and bent the frail fir-branches 'neath the horns of Taurus in their wantonness. As in the winter time that wind was wont to breathe. Likewise the boastful Orion was at the point of staying to pursue with tears the beauteous Taurine shoulder of the seven sisters.

Whether Francesco Colonna prepared the redaction from which this paragraph is quoted, admits of doubt. A scholar, Leonardo Crasso of Verona, defrayed the cost of the edition. Manutius Aldus printed the volume and its pages were adorned with precious woodcuts, the work of more than one anonymous master of the Lombardo-Venetian school.[1] It was dedicated to Duke Guidobaldo of Urbino.

For the student of Italian literature in its transition from the middle age to the Renaissance, the *Hypnerotomachia* has special and many-sided interest. It shows that outside Florence, where the pure Italian idiom was too vigorous to be suppressed, humanistic fashion had so far taken possession of the literary fancy as to threaten the very existence of the mother tongue. But, more than this, it represents that epoch of transition in its fourfold intellectual craving after the beauty of antiquity, the treasures of erudition, the multiplied delights of art, and the liberty of nature. These cravings are allegorised in a romance of love, which blends medieval mysticism with modern sensuousness. Like the style, the matter of the book is maccaronic, parti-coloured and confused; but the passion which controls so many elements is genuine and simple. The spirit of the earlier Renaissance reflects itself, as in a mirror, in the Dream of Poliphil. So essentially is it the product of a transitional moment

[1] When the book was translated into French and republished at Paris in the sixteenth century, the blocks were imitated, and at a later epoch it became fashionable to refer them to Raphael. The mistake was gross. Its only justification is the style adopted by the French imitators in their rehandling of the illustrations to Poliphil's soul pleading before Venus. These cuts seem to have felt the influence of the Farnesina frescoes.

that when the first enthusiasm for its euphuistic pedantry and æsthetical rapture had subsided, the key to its most obvious meaning was lost. In the preface to the fourth French edition (1600), Beroald de Verville hinted that the volume held deep alchemistic secrets for those who could discover them. After this distortion, the book passed into not altogether unmerited oblivion. It had done its work for the past age. It now remains an invaluable monument for those who would fain reconstruct the century which gave it birth.

The *Hypnerotomachia* professes to relate its author's love for Polia, a nun, his search after her, and their union, at the close of sundry trials and adventures, in the realm of Venus. Poliphil dreams that he finds himself in a wild wood, where he is assailed by monstrous beasts, and suffers great distress of mind. He prays to Diespiter, and comes forthwith into a pleasant valley, through which he wanders in the hope of finding Polia. At the outset of his journey he meets five damsels, Aphea, Offressia, Orassia, Achoe, Geussia, who conduct him to their queen, Eleuterilyda.[1] She understands his quest, and assigns the maidens, Logistica and Thelemia, to be his guide into the palace of Telosia. They journey together and arrive at the abode of Dame Telosia, which has three gates severally inscribed in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin characters

[1] Here is the description of Poliphil's reception by the damsels: 'Respose una lepidula placidamente dicendo. Da mi la mano. Hora si tu sospite & il bene venuto. Nui al presento siamo cinque sociale comite come il vedi; Et io me chiamo Aphea. Et questa che porta li buxuli & gli bianchissimi liuteamini, e nominata Offressia. Et questaltra che dil splendente speculo (delitie nostre) e gerula, Orassia e il suo nome. Costei che tene la sonora lyra, e dicta Achoe. Questa ultima, che questo vaso di pretiosissimo liquore baiula, ha nome Geussia.'

with legends, the meaning whereof is God's Glory, Mother of Love, and Worldly Glory. Poliphil enters the first door, and finds the place within but little to his liking. Then he tries the third, and is no better pleased. Lastly he gains admittance to the demesne of Love's Mother, where he is content to stay. Lovely and lascivious maidens greet him kindly; and while he surrenders to their invitation, one of his attendants, Logistica, takes her flight. He is left with his beloved Thelemia to enjoy the pleasures of this enchanting region.

Thus far the allegory is not hard to read. Poliphil, or the lover of Polia, escapes from the perils of the forest where his earlier life was passed, by petition to the Father of Gods and Men. He places himself in the hands of the five senses, who conduct him to free-will. Freewill appoints for his further guidance reason and inclination, who are to lead him to the final choice of lives. When he arrives at the point where this choice has to be made, he perceives that God, the world, and beauty, who is mother of love, compete for his willing service. He rejects religion and ambition; and no sooner has his preference for love and beauty been avowed, than the reasoning faculty deserts him, and he is abandoned to inclination.

While Poliphil is dallying with the nymphs of pleasure and his own wanton will, he is suddenly abandoned by these companions, and pursues his journey alone.[1] Before long, however, he becomes

[1] A portion of the passage describing this dalliance may be extracted as a further specimen of the author's style: 'Cum lascivi vulti, et gli pecti procaci, ochii blandienti et nella rosea fronte micanti e ludibondi. Forme prae-excellente, Habiti incentivi, Moventie puellare, Risguardi

aware of a maiden, exceedingly fair to look upon, who carries in her hand a lighted torch. With her for guide, he passes through many pleasant places, arriving finally at the temple of Venus Physizoe. This maiden, though as yet he cannot recognise her, is the Polia he seeks, and on their way together he feels the influences of her love-compelling beauty. They enter the chapel of Venus, and are graciously received by the prioress who guards that sanctuary. Mystical rites of initiation and consecration are performed. Polia lays down her torch, and is discovered by her lover. Then they are wedded by grace of the abiding goddess; and having undergone the ceremony of spousal, they resume their wanderings together. They pass through a desolate city of tombs and ruins, named Polyandrion, where are the sepulchres and epitaphs of lovers. Here, too, they witness the pangs of souls tormented for their crimes against the deity of Love. Afterwards they reach a great water, where Cupid's barge comes sailing by, and takes them to the island of Cythera. It is a level land of gardens, groves and labyrinths, adorned with theatres and baths, and watered by a mystic fount of Venus. Near the tomb of Adonis in this demesne of Love, Polia and Poliphil sit down to rest among the nymphs, and Polia relates the story of their early passion.

mordenti, Exornato mundissimo. Niuna parte simulata, ma tutto dalla natura perfecto, cum exquisita politione, Niente difforme ma tutto harmonia concinnissima, Capi flavi cum le trece biondissime e crini insolari tante erano bellissime complicate, cum cordicelle, o vero nextruli di seta e di fili doro intorte, quanto che in tutto la operatione humana excedevano, circa la testa cum egregio componimento invilupate e cum achi crinali detente, e la fronte di cincinni capreoli silvata, cum lascivula inconstantia praependenti.'. There is an obvious study of Boccaccesque phrase, with a no less obvious desire to improve upon its exquisiteness of detail, masking an incapacity to write connectedly.

It is here, if anywhere, that we come across reality in this romance. Polia tells how the town of Treviso was founded, and of what illustrious lineage she came, and how she vowed herself to the service of Diana when the plague was raging in the city. In Dian's temple Poliphil first saw her, and fainted at the sight, and she, made cruel by the memory of her vows, left him upon the temple-floor for dead. But when she returned home, a vision of women punished for their hard heart smote her conscience; and her old nurse, an adept in the ways of love, counselled her to seek the Prioress of Venus, and confess, and enter into reconcilement with her lover. What the nurse advised, Polia did, and in the temple of Venus she met Poliphil. He, while his body lay entranced upon the floor of Dian's church, had visited the heavens in spirit and obtained grace from Venus and Cupid. Therefore, the twain were now of one accord, and ready to be joined in bonds of natural affection. At the end of Polia's story, the nymphs leave both lovers to enjoy their new-found happiness. But here the power of sleep is spent, and Poliphil, awakened by the song of swallows, starts from dreams with 'Farewell, my Polia!' upon his lips.

Such is the frail and slender basis of romance, corresponding in the details of Polia's narrative to an ordinary *novella*, upon which the bulky edifice of the *Hypnerotomachia* is built. This love-story, while it gives form to the book, is clearly not the author's main motive. What really concerns him most deeply is the handling of artistic themes, which, though introduced by way of digressions, occupy by far the

larger portion of his work. The *Hypnerotomachia* is an encyclopædia of curious learning, a treasure-house of æsthetical descriptions and discussions, vividly reflecting the two ruling enthusiasms of the earlier Renaissance for scholarship and art. Minute details of inexhaustible variety, bringing before our imagination the architecture, sculpture, and painting of the fifteenth century, its gardens, palaces and temples, its processions, triumphs and ceremonial shows, its delight in costly jewels, furniture, embroidery and banquets, its profound feeling for the beauty of women, and its admiration for the goodliness of athletic manhood, are massed together with bewildering profusion. Not one of the technical arts which flourished in the dawn of the Renaissance but finds due celebration here; and the whole is penetrated with that fervent reverence for antiquity which inspired the humanists. Yet the *Hypnerotomachia*, though sometimes tedious, is never frigid. With the precision of a treatise and the minuteness of an inventory, it combines the ardour of impassioned feeling, the rapture of anticipation, the artist's blending with the lover's ecstasy. It is a dithyramb of the imagination, inflamed by no Oriental lust of mere magnificence, but by the fine sense of what is beautiful in form, rare in material, just in proportion, exquisite in workmanship.

Whether the *Hypnerotomachia* exercised a powerful influence over the productions of the Italian genius, can be doubted. But that it presents an epitome or figured abstract of the Renaissance in its earlier luxuriance, is unmistakeable. Reading it, we wander through the collections of Paul II., rich with jewels,

intagli, cameos and coins; we enter Amadeo's chapels, Filarete's palaces, Bramante's peristyles and *loggie*; we pace the gardens of the Brenta and the Sforza's deer-parks at Pavia; we watch Lorenzo's Florentine *trionfi* and Pietro Riario's festivals in Rome; Giorgione's *fêtes champêtres* are set for us in framework of the choicest fruits and flowers; we hear Ciriac of Ancona discoursing on his epigraphs and broken marbles; before our eyes, as in a gallery, are ranged the bas-reliefs of Donatello wrought in bronze, Mantegna's triumphs, Signorelli's arabesques, the terra-cotta of the Lombard and the stucco of the Roman schools, the carved-work of Alberti's church at Rimini, the *tarsiatura* of Fra Giovanni da Verona's choir-stalls, doorways from Milanese and chimneys from Urbino palaces, Vatican tapestries and trellis-work of beaten iron from Prato—all that the Renaissance in its bloom produced, is here depicted with the wealth and warmth of fancy doting on anticipated beauties.

Of the author, Francesco Colonna, very little is known, except that he was born in 1433 at Venice, that he attached himself to Ermolao Barbaro, spent a portion of his manhood in the Dominican cloister of S. Niccolò at Treviso, and died at Venice in 1527. Whether the love-tale of the *Hypnerotomachia* had a basis of reality, or whether we ought to regard it wholly from the point of view of allegory, cannot be decided now. It is, however, probable that a substratum of experience underlay the vast mass of superimposed erudition and enthusiastic reverie. The references to Polia's name and race; her epitaph appended to the first edition; the details of her narra-

tive, which somewhat break the continuity of style and introduce a biographical element into the romance; the very structure of the allegory which assigns so large a part in life to sensuous instinct—all these points seem to prove that Poliphil was moved by memory of what had really happened, no less than by the desire to express a certain mood of feeling and belief. Such mingling of actual emotion with ideal passion in a work of imagination, dedicated to a woman who is also an emblem, was consistent with the practice of medieval poets. Polia belongs, under altered circumstances, to the same class as Beatrice. The hypothesis that, whoever she may have been, she had become for her lover a metaphor of antique beauty, is sufficiently attractive and plausible. If we adopt this theory, we must interpret the dark wood where Poliphil first found himself, to mean the anarchy of Gothic art; while his emancipation through the senses and Thelemia characterises the spirit in which the Italians achieved the Revival. The extraordinary care lavished upon details, interrupting the course of the romance and withdrawing our sympathy from Polia, meet from this point of view with justification. Veiling his enthusiasm for the renascent past beneath the fiction of a novel, Francesco Colonna invests the lady of his intellectual choice, the handmaid of Aphrodite, evoked from the sepulchre where arts and sciences lie buried, with rich Renaissance trappings of elaborate device. Beneath those exuberant arabesques, within that labyrinth of technically perfect details, suave outlines, delicate contours devoid of content, a real woman would be lost. But if Polia be

not merely a woman, if she be, as her name πολία seems to indicate, at the same time the vision of resurgent classic beauty, then the setting which her lover has contrived is adequate to the influences which inspired him. The multiform and laboured frame-work of his picture acquires a meaning from the spirit of the goddess whom he worships, and the presiding genius of his age dwells in a shrine, each point of which is brilliant with the splendour which that spirit radiates.

It is, therefore, as an allegory of the Renaissance, conscious of its destiny and strongest aspirations in the person of an almost nameless monk, that we should read the *Hypnerotomachia*. Still, even so, the mark of indecision, which rests upon the many twy-formed masterpieces of this century, is here discernible. Francesco Colonna has one foot in the middle ages, another planted on the firm ground of the modern era. He wavers between the psychological realism of romance and the philosophical idealism of allegory. Polia is both too much and too little of a woman. At one time her personality seems as distinct as that of any heroine of fiction ; at another we lose sight of her in the mist of symbolism. Granting, again, that she is a metaphor, she lends herself to more than one conception. She is both an emblem of passion, sanctified by nature, and liberated from the bondage of asceticism, and also an emblem of ideal beauty, recovered from the past, and worshipped by a scholar-artist.

This confusion of motives and uncertainty of aim, while it detracts from the artistic value of the *Hypnerotomachia*, enhances its historical importance.

In form, the book has to be classed with the Visions of the middle ages—the Divine Comedy, the *Amorosa Visione*, and the *Quadriregio*. But though the form is medieval, the inspiration of this prose-poem is quite other. We have seen already how Francesco Colonna, travelling in search of Polia, prayed to Jupiter, and how the senses and free will guided him to the satisfaction of his deepest self in the service of Beauty. It is in the temple of Venus Physizoe (Venus the procreative source of life in Nature) that he meets with his love and is wedded to her in the bonds of mutual desire.[1] Christianity is wholly, we might say systematically, ignored. The ascetic standpoint of the middle age is abandoned for another, antagonistic to its ruling impulses. A new creed, a new cult, are introduced. Polia, whether we regard her as the poet's mistress or as the spirit of antiquity which has enamoured him, is won by worship paid to deities of natural appetite. In its essence, then, the *Hypnerotomachia* corresponds to the most fruitful instinct of the Renaissance—to that striving after emancipation which restored humanity to its heritage in the realms of sense and reason. Old ideals, exhausted and devoid of vital force, are exchanged for fresh and beautiful reality. The spirituality of the past, which has become consumptive and ineffective by lapse of time and long familiarity, yields to vigorous animalism. The cloister is quitted for the world,

[1] The reiteration of sensuous phrases is significant. These inscriptions, παντων τοκαδι, παν δει ποιειν κατα την αυτου φυσιν, γονος και ευφυια, together with the Triumphs of Priapus and Cupid, accord with the supremacy of Venus Physizoe.

religious for artistic ecstasy, celestial for earthly paradise, scholasticism for humane studies, the ascetic for the hedonistic rule of conduct. Criticised according to its deeper meaning, the *Hypnerotomachia* is the poem of which Valla's *De Voluptate* was the argument, of which Lorenzo de' Medici's life was the realisation, and the life of Aretino the caricature. If it assumes the form of a vision, reminding us thereby that the author was born upon the confines of the middle ages and the modern era, it deals with the vision in no Dantesque spirit, but with the geniality of Apuleius. Allegory is but a transparent veil, to make the nudity of natural impulse fascinating. As in Boccaccio, so here the hymn of *il talento*, simple appetite, is sung; but the fusion of artistic and humanistic enthusiasms with this ground-motive adds peculiar quality, distinctive of the later age which gave it birth.

The secret of its charm, which, indeed, it shares with earlier Renaissance art in general, is that this yearning after freedom has been felt with rapture, but not fully satisfied. The season of repletion and satiety is distant. Venus Physizoe appears to Francesco Colonna radiant above all powers of heaven or earth, because he is a monk and may not serve her. Had he his whole will, she might have been for him Venus Volvivaga, and he the author of another *Puttana Errante*. Nor has she yet assumed the earnest mask of science. This element of unassuaged desire, indulged in longings and outgoings of the fancy, this recognition of man's highest good and happiness in nature by one who has forsworn allegiance to the laws of nature, adds warmth to his emotion and pene-

trates his pictures with a kind of passion. The arts and scholarship, which divide the empire of his soul with beauty, have no less attraction of romance than love itself. Nor are they separated in his mind from nature. Nature and antiquity, knowledge and desire, the reverence for abstract beauty and the instincts of a lover are fused in one enthusiasm. Thus Francesco Colonna makes us understand how Italy used both art and erudition as instruments in the liberation of human energies. For the thinkers and actors of that period, antiquity and the plastic arts were aids to the recovery of a paradise from which man had been exiled. They could not dissociate the conception of nature from studies which revealed their human dignity and freedom, or from arts whereby they expressed their vivid sense of beauty. The work they thus inaugurated, had afterwards to be continued by the scientific faculties.

One word may finally be said about the peculiar delicacy of this book. The *Hypnerotomachia* is no less an apotheosis of natural appetite than the *Amorosa Visione*. But it is more sentimental and imaginative, because its author had not Boccaccio's crude experience. It anticipates the art of the great age—the art of Cellini and Giulio Romano, goldsmith-sculptors and palace-builders; but it is more refined and passionate, because its author enjoyed those beauties of consummate craft in reverie instead of practice. It interprets the enthusiasm of Ciriac and Poggio, discoverers of manuscripts, decipherers of epigraphs; but it is more *naïf* and graceful than their work of erudition, because its author dealt freely with his learning

and subordinated scholarship to fancy. In short the *Hypnerotomachia* is a foreshadowing of the Renaissance in its prime—the spirit of the age foreseen in dreams, embodied in imagination, purged of material alloy, and freed from the encumbrances of actuality.

CHAPTER IV.

POPULAR SECULAR POETRY.

Separation between Cultivated Persons and the People—Italian despised by the Learned—Contempt for Vernacular Literature—The *Certamen Coronarium*—Literature of Instruction for the Proletariate—Growth of Italian Prose—Abundance of Popular Poetry—The People in the Quattrocento take the Lead—Qualities of Italian Genius—Arthurian and Carolingian Romances—*I Reali di Francia*—Andrea of Barberino and his Works—Numerous Romances in Prose and Verse—Positive Spirit—Versified Tales from Boccaccio—Popular Legends—Ginevra degli Almieri—Novel of *Il Grasso*—Histories in Verse—*Lamenti*—The Poets of the People—*Cantatori in Banca*—Antonio Pucci—His *Sermintesi* — Political Songs—Satires — Burchiello—His Life and Writings—Dance-Songs—Derived from Cultivated Literature, or produced by the People—Poliziano—Love-Songs—*Rispetti* and *Stornelli* —The Special Meaning of *Strambotti*—Diffusion of this Poetry over Italy—Its Permanence—Question of its Original Home—Intercommunication and Exchange of Dialects—*Incatenature* and *Rappresaglie* —Travelling in Medieval Italy—The Subject-Matter of this Poetry—Deficiency in Ballad Elements—Canti Monferrini—The Ballad of *L'Avvelenato* and Lord Ronald.

DURING the fifteenth century there was an almost complete separation between the cultivated classes and the people. Humanists, intent upon the exploration of the classics, deemed it below their dignity to use the vulgar tongue. They thought and wrote in Latin, and had no time to bestow upon the education of the common folk. A polite public was formed, who in the Courts of princes and the palaces of noblemen amused themselves with the ephemeral literature of pamphlets, essays, and epistles in the Latin tongue. For these

well-educated readers Poggio and Pontano wrote their Latin novels. The same learned audience applauded the gladiators of the moment, Valla and Filelfo, when they descended into the arena and plied each other with pseudo-Ciceronian invectives. To quit this refined circle, and address the vulgar crowd, was thought unworthy of a man of erudition. Even Alberti, as we have seen, felt bound to apologise for sending his *Teogenio* in Italian to Lionello d'Este. Only here and there a humanist of the first rank is found who, like Bruni, devoted a portion of his industry to the Italian lives of Dante and Petrarch, or like Filelfo, lectured on the Divine Comedy, or again like Landino, composed a Dantesque commentary in the mother tongue. Moreover, Dante and Petrarch passed for almost classical; and in nearly all such instances of condescension, pecuniary interest swayed the scholar from his wonted orbit. It was want of skill in Latin rather than love for his own idiom which induced Vespasiano to pen his lives of great men in Italian. Not spontaneous inspiration, but the whim of a ducal patron forced Filelfo to use *terza rima* for his worthless poem on S. John, and to write a commentary upon Petrarch in the vernacular.[1] One of this man's letters reveals the humanist's contempt for the people's language, and his rooted belief in the immortality of

[1] See Rosmini, *Vita di Filelfo*, vol. ii. p. 13, for Filelfo's dislike of Italian. In the dedication of his Commentary to Filippo Maria Visconti he says: 'Tanto più volentieri ho intrapreso questo comento, quanto dalla tua eccellente Signoria non solo invitato sono stato, ma pregato, lusingato et provocato.' The first Canto opens thus:

O Philippo Maria Anglo possente,
Perchè mi strengi a quel che non poss' io?
Vuoi tu ch' io sia ludibrio d' ogni gente?

Latin. It is worth translating.[1] 'I will answer you,' he says, 'not in the vulgar language, as you ask, but in Latin, and our own true speech; for I have ever had an abhorrence for the talk of grooms and servants, equal to my detestation of their life and manners. You, however, call that dialect vernacular which, when I use the Tuscan tongue, I sometimes write. All Italians agree in praise of Tuscan. Yet I only employ it for such matters as I do not choose to transmit to posterity. Moreover, even that Tuscan idiom is hardly current throughout Italy, while Latin is far and wide diffused throughout the habitable world.' From this interesting epistle we gather that even professional scholars in the middle of the fifteenth century recognised Tuscan as a quasi-literary language, superior in polish to the other Italian dialects, but not to be compared for dignity and durability with Latin. It also proves that the language of Boccaccio was for them almost a foreign speech.

This attitude of learned writers produced a curious obtuseness of critical insight. Niccolò Niccoli, though he was a Florentine, called Dante 'a poet for bakers and cobblers.' Pico della Mirandola preferred Lorenzo de' Medici's verses to Petrarch. Landino complained, not, indeed, without good reason in that century, that the vulgar language could boast of no great authors. Filippo Villani, in the proem to his biographies, apologised for his father Matteo, who exerted humble faculties and scanty culture to his best ability. Lorenzo de' Medici defended himself for paying attention to an idiom which men of good judgment blamed for 'low-

[1] Dated Milan, Feb. 1477. Rosmini, *op. cit.* p. 282.

ness, incapacity and unworthiness to deal with high themes or grave material.' Benedetto Varchi, who lived to be an excellent though somewhat cumbrous writer of Italian prose, gives this account of his early training[1]: 'I remember that when I was a lad, the first and strictest rule of a father to his sons, and of a master to his pupils, was that they should on no account and for no object read anything in the vulgar speech (*non legesseno cose volgari, per dirlo barbaramente come loro*); and Master Guasparre Mariscotti da Marradi, who was my teacher in grammar, a man of hard and rough but pure and excellent manners, having once heard, I know not how, that Schiatta di Bernardo Bagnesi and I were wont to read Petrarch on the sly, gave us a sound rating for it, and nearly expelled us from his school.' Some of Varchi's own stylistic pedantries may be attributed to this Latinising education.

Even when they wrote their mother tongue, it followed that the men of humanistic culture had a false conception of style. Alberti could not abstain from Latinistic rhetoric. Cristoforo Landino went the length of asserting that 'he who would fain be a good Tuscan writer, must first be a Latin scholar.' The Italian of familiar correspondence was mingled in almost equal quantities with Latin phrases. Thus Poliziano, writing from Venice to Lorenzo de' Medici, employs the following strange maccaronic jargon[2]:

Visitai stamattina Messer Zaccheria Barbero; e mostrandoli io l' affezione vostra ec., mi rispose sempre lagrimando, et ut visum est,

[1] *Ercolano* (in Vinetia, Giunti, 1570), p. 185.

[2] *Prose Volgari*, etc., edite da I. del Lungo (Firenze, Barbèra, 1867), p. 80.

de cuore; risolvendosi in questo, in te uno spem esse. Ostendit se nosse quantum tibi debeat; sicchè fate quello ragionaste, ut favens ad majora. Quello Legato che torna da Roma, et qui tecum locutus est Florentiæ, non è punto a loro proposito, ut ajunt.

Poliziano, however, showed by his letters to the ladies of the Medicean family, and by some sermons composed for a religious brotherhood of which he was a member, that he had no difficulty in writing Tuscan prose of the best quality.[1] It seems to have been a contemptuous fashion among men of learning, when they used the mother tongue for correspondence, to load it with Latin—just as a German of the age of Frederick proved his superiority by French phrases. The acme of this affectation was reached in the *Hypnerotomachia*, where the vice of Latinism sought perpetuation through the printing press. Meanwhile, the genius of the Florentine people was saving Italian literature from the extreme consequences to which caricatures of this kind, inspired by humanistic pedantry and sciolism, exposed it.

A characteristic incident of the year 1441 brings before us a set of men who, though obscure and devoted to the service of the common folk, exercised no slight influence over the destinies of the Italian language. After the reinstatement of the Medici, and while Alberti was resident in Florence, it occurred to him to propose the prize of a silver crown for the best poem upon Friendship, in the vulgar tongue. Piero de' Medici approving of this scheme, it was arranged that the contest for the prize should take place in S. Maria del Fiore, the competitors reciting

[1] *Prose*, etc., *op. cit.* p. 45 *et seq.* pp. 3 *et seq.*

their own compositions. The secretaries of Pope Eugenius IV. consented to be umpires. Eight poets entered the lists—Michele di Noferi del Gigante, Francesco d'Altobianco degli Alberti, and six others not less unknown to fame. We still possess their compositions in octave stanzas, *terza rima*, sapphics, hexameters and lyric strophes.[1] The poems were so bad that even the judges of that period refused to award the crown; nor could the most indulgent student of forgotten literature arraign this verdict for severity. Yet the men who engaged in Alberti's *Certamen Coronarium*, as it was called, fairly represented a class of literary workers, who occupied a middle place between the learned and the laity, and on whom devolved the task of writing for the people.

Since that unique moment in the history of Tuscan civilisation when the lyrics of Dante and Guido Cavalcanti were heard upon the lips of blacksmiths, the artisans of Florence had not wholly lost their thirst for culture. Style and erudition retired into the schools of the humanists and the studies of the nobles. But this curiosity of the *volgo*, as Boccaccio contemptuously called them, was satisfied by the production of a vernacular literature, which brought the ruder

[1] Alberti, *Op. Volg.* vol. i. pp. clxvii.-ccxxxiii. The quality of these Latin metres may be judged from the following hexameters:

Ma non prima sarà che 'l Dato la musa corona
Invochi, allora subito cantando l' avete,
Tal qual si gode presso il celeste Tonante.

Of the Sapphics the following is a specimen:

Eccomi, i' son qui Dea degli amici,
Quella qual tutti li omini solete
Mordere, e falso fugitiva dirli,
Or la volete.

elements of knowledge within their reach. Mention has already been made of Latini's *Tesoro* and *Tesoretto*, Uberti's *Dittamondo* and similar encyclopædic works of mediæval learning. To these may now be added Leonardo Dati's cosmographical history in octave stanzas, the Schiavo da Bari's aphorisms on morality, and Pucci's *terza rima* version of Villani's Chronicle. Genealogical poems on popes, emperors and kings; episodes from national Italian history; novels, romances and tales of chivalry; pious biographies; the rudiments of education, from the *Dottrinale* of Jacopo Alighieri down to Feo Belcari's *A B C*, helped to complete the handicraftsman's library. Further to describe this plebeian literature is hardly necessary. The authors advanced no pretensions to artistic elegance or stateliness of style. They sought to render knowledge accessible to unlettered readers, or to please an open-air audience with stirring and romantic narratives. Their language broke only at rare intervals into poetry and rhetoric, when the subject-matter forced a note of unaffected feeling from the improvisatore. Yet it has always the merit of purity, and, in point of idiom, is superior to the Latinistic periods of Alberti. By means of the neglected labours of these nameless writers, the style of the fourteenth century, so winning in its infantine grace, was gradually transformed and rendered capable of stronger literary utterance. Those who have studied a single prose-work of this period—*I Reali di Francia*, for instance, or Belcari's *Vita del Beato Colombino*, or the *Governo della Famiglia* ascribed to Pandolfini—will be convinced that a real progress toward grammatical

cohesion and massiveness of structure was made during those years of the fifteenth century which are usually counted barren of achievement by literary historians. Italian prose had entered on the period of adolescence, leading to the manhood of Machiavelli.

The popular poetry of the *quattrocento* is still more interesting than its prose. No period of Italian history was probably more fruitful of songs poured forth from the very heart of the people, on the fields and in the city. The music of these lyrics still lingers about the Tuscan highlands and the shores of Sicily, where much that now passes for original composition is but the echo of most ancient melody stored in the retentive memory of peasants. To investigate the several species of this poetry, together with kindred works of prose-fiction, under the several classes of (i) epics and romances, (ii) histories in verse and satires, (iii) love-poems, (iv) religious lyrics, and (v) dramas, will be my object in the present and the following chapters. This survey of popular literature forms a necessary introduction to the renascence which was simultaneously effected for Italian at Florence, Ferrara and Naples during the last years of the century. The material prepared by the people was then resumed and artistically elaborated by learned authors.

It has been well said that Italian poetry exhibits a continual reciprocity of exchange between the cultivated classes and the proletariate. In this respect the literature of the Italians corresponds to their fine art. Taken together with painting, sculpture, and music, it offers a more complete embodiment of the national spirit than can be shown by any other modern race.

Dante's Francesca and Count Ugolino, Ariosto's golden cantos, and the romantic episodes of the *Gerusalemme* are known by heart throughout the length and breadth of the Peninsula. The people have appropriated these masterpieces of finished art. On the other hand, the literary poets have been ever careful to borrow subjects, forms, and motives from the populace. The close *rapport* which thus connects the tastes and instincts of the proletariate with the culture of the aristocracy, is rooted in peculiar conditions of Italian society. Traditions of a very ancient civilisation, derived without apparent rupture from the Roman age, have penetrated and refined the whole nation. From the highest to the lowest, the Italians are born with sensibility to beauty. This people and its poets live in sympathy so vital that, though their mutual good understanding may have been suspended for short intervals, it has never been broken. The vibrations of intercourse between the peasant and the learned writer are incessant; and if we notice some intermittency of influence on one side or the other, it is only because at one epoch the destinies of the national genius were committed to the people, at another to the cultivated classes. In the fifteenth century, one of these temporary ruptures occurred. The Revival of Learning had to be effected by an isolation of the scholars. Meanwhile, the people carried on the work of literary transmutation, which was to connect Boccaccio with Pulci and Poliziano. Their instinct rejected all elements alien to the national temperament. Out of the many models bequeathed by the fourteenth century, only those which suited the sen-

suous realism of the Florentines survived. The traditions of Ciullo d' Alcamo and Jacopone da Todi, of Rustico di Filippo and Lapo Gianni, of Folgore da S. Gemignano and Cene dalla Chitarra, of Cecco Angiolieri and Guido Cavalcanti, of Boccaccio and Sacchetti, of Ser Giovanni and Alesso Donati, triumphed over the scholasticism of those learned poets—'half Provençal and half Latin, half chivalrous and half *bourgeois*, half monastic and half sensual, half aristocratic and half plebeian'[1]—who had unsuccessfully experimentalised in the dawn of Tuscan culture. The artificial chivalry, lifeless mysticism, barren metaphysics, and hypocritical piety of the rhyming doctors were eliminated. Common sense expressed itself in a reaction against their conventional philosophy. Giotto's blunt critique of Franciscan poverty, Orcagna's burlesque definition of Love, not as a blind boy with wings and arrows, but thus:

> L' amore è un trastullo;
> Non è composto di legno nè d' osso;
> E a molta gente fa rompere il dosso:

struck the keynote of the new literature.[2] It is true that much was sacrificed. Both Dante and Petrarch seemed to be forgotten. Yet this was inevitable. Dante represented a bygone age of faith and reason. Petrarch's humanity was too exquisitely veiled. The Florentine people required expression more simple and direct, movement more brusque, emotion of a coarser fibre. Meanwhile the Divine Comedy and

[1] Carducci, 'Delle Rime di Dante Alighieri,' *Studi*, p. 154.
[2] For Giotto's and Orcagna's poems, see Trucchi, vol ii. pp. 8 and 25.

the *Canzoniere* were the inalienable possessions of the nation. They had already taken rank as classics.

The Italians had no national Epic, if we except the *Æneid*. We have seen how the romances of Charlemagne and Arthur were imported with the languages of France and Provence into Northern Italy, and how they passed into the national literature of Lombardy and Tuscany.[1] Both cycles were eminently popular. The *Tavola Ritonda* ranks among the earliest monuments of Tuscan prose.[2] The *Cento Novelle* contain frequent references to Merlin, Lancelot and Tristram. Folgore da S. Gemignano compares the members of his Joyous Company to King Ban's children. In the *Laberinto d' Amore* Boccaccio speaks of Arthurian tales as the favourite studies of idle women, and Sacchetti bids his blacksmith turn from Dante to legends of the Round Table. Yet there is no doubt that from a very early period the Carolingian cycle gained the preference of the Italian people.[3] It is also noticeable that, not the main legend of Roland, but the episode of Rinaldo, and other offshoots from the history of the Frankish peers, furnished plebeian poets with their favourite material.[4] MSS. written in Venetian and Franco-

[1] See above, pp. 17 *et seq.*

[2] The *Tavola Ritonda* has been reprinted, 2 vols., Bologna, Romagnoli, 1864. It corresponds very closely in material to our *Mort d'Arthur*, beginning with the history of Uther Pendragon and ending with Arthur's wound and departure to the island of Morgan le Fay.

[3] See above, p. 18. The subject of these romances has been ably treated by Pio Rajna in his works, *I Reali di Francia* (Bologna, Romagnoli, 1872), and *Le Fonti dell' Orlando Furioso* (Firenze, Sansoni, 1876).

[4] The *Rinaldino*, a prose romance recently published (Bologna, Romagnoli, 1865), might be selected as a thoroughly Italian *fioritura* on the ancient Carolingian theme.

Italian dialects before the middle of the fourteenth century attest to the popularity of these subordinate romances, and reveal an independent handling of the borrowed subject. In form they do not diverge widely from French originals. Yet there is one prominent characteristic which distinguishes the Italian *rifacimenti*. A Christian hero falls in love with a pagan heroine on pagan soil. His pursuit of her, their difficulties and adventures, and the evangelisation of her people by the knightly lover, furnish a series of incidents which recur with singular persistence.[1] When the romances in question had been translated into Tuscan, a destiny of special splendour was reserved for two of them, in no way distinguished by any apparent merit above the rest. These were the tales of Buovo d' Antona, of which we possess an early version in octave stanzas, and of Fioravante, which exists in still older prose. About the beginning of the fifteenth century, the *Buovo* and the *Fioravante*, together with other material drawn from the Carolingian epic, were combined into the great prose work called *I Reali di Francia*.[2] Since its first appearance to the present day, this romance has never ceased to be the most widely popular of all books written in Italian. 'There is nothing,' says Signor Rajna, 'so assiduously read from the Alps to the furthest headlands of Sicily. Wherever a reader exists, there is it certain to be found in honour.'[3] Not the earliest but

[1] We have here the germ of the *Orlando* and of the first part of the *Morgante*.

[2] Rajna, *I Reali*, p. 320, fixes the date of its composition at a little before 1420.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 3.

the latest product of a long elaboration of romantic matter by the people, it seems to have assimilated the very essence of the popular imagination. When we enquire into its authorship, we find good reason to ascribe it to Andrea dei Mangalotti of Barberino in the Val d' Elsa, one of the best and most indefatigable workmen for the literary market of the proletariate.[1] It was he who compiled the *Aspromonte*, the *Aïolfo*, the seven books of *Storie Nerbonesi*, the *Ugone d' Avernia*, and the *Guerino il Meschino*, reducing these tales from elder poems and prose sources into Tuscan of sterling lucidity and vigour, and attempting, it would seem, to embrace the whole Carolingian cycle in a series of episodical romances.[2] *Guerino il Meschino* rivalled for a while the *Reali* in popularity; but for some unknown reason, which would have to be sought in the instinctive partialities of the people, it was gradually superseded by the latter. The *Reali* alone has descended in its original form through the press to this century.[3]

Andrea da Barberino, if we are right in ascribing the *Reali* to his pen, conferred a benefit on the Italians parallel to that which the English owed to Sir Thomas Mallory in his 'Mort d' Arthur.' He not only collected and condensed the scattered tales of numerous unknown predecessors, but he also bequeathed to the nation a monument of unaffected prose at a

[1] *I Reali*, pp. 311–319.

[2] The *Storie Nerbonesi* were published in 2 vols. (Bologna, Romagnoli, 1877), under the editorship of I. G. Isola. The third volume forms a copious philological and critical appendix.

[3] *Guerino* was versified in octave stanzas, by a poet of the people called L'Altissimo, in the sixteenth century.

moment when the language was still ingenuous and plastic. It would be not uninteresting to compare the fate of the *Reali* with that of our own 'Mort d' Arthur.' The latter was the more artistic performance of the two. It achieved a truer epical unity, and was composed in a richer, more romantic style. The former remained episodical and incomplete; and its language, though solid and efficient, lacked the charm of Mallory's all golden prose. Yet the *Reali* is still a household classic. It is found in every *contadino's* cottage, and supplies the peasantry with subjects for their *Maggi*. The 'Mort d' Arthur,' on the contrary, has become the plaything of medievalising folk in modern England. Read for its unique beauty by students, it is still unknown to the people, and, in the opinion of the dull majority, it is reckoned inferior to Tennyson's smooth imitations.

When we come to consider the romantic poems of Pulci, Boiardo, and Ariosto, we shall be able to estimate the service rendered by men like Andrea da Barberino to polite Italian literature. The popularity of the cycle to which the *Reali* belonged, decided the choice of the Carolingian epic by the poets of Florence and Ferrara. Nor were the above-mentioned romances by any means the only works of their kind produced for a plebeian audience in the *quattrocento*. It is enough to mention *La Regina Ancroja*, *La Spagna*, *Trebisonda con la Vita e Morte di Rinaldo*. Both in prose and verse an abundant literature of the kind was manufactured. Without being positively burlesqued, the heroes of chivalrous story were travestied to suit the taste of artisans and burghers.

The element of the marvellous was surcharged; comic and pathetic episodes were multiplied; beneath the armour of the Paladins Italian characters were substituted with spontaneous malice for the obsolete ideals of feudalism. It only needed a touch of conscious irony to convert the material thus elaborated by the people into the airy fabric of Ariosto's art. At the same time the form which the epic of romance was destined to assume, had been determined. The streets and squares of town and village rang with the chants of improvisatori, turning the prose periods of Andrea da Barberino and his predecessors into wordy octave stanzas, rehandling ancient *Chansons de Geste*, and adapting the mannerism of chivalrous minstrelsy to the requirements of a subtle-witted Tuscan crowd. The old-fashioned invocations of God, Madonna, or some saint were preserved at the beginning of each canto, while the audience received their *congé* from the author at its close. When the poems thus produced were committed to writing, the plebeian author feigned at least the inspiration of a bard.

While the traditions of medieval song were thus preserved, the prose-romances followed, as closely as possible, the style of a chronicle, and aimed at the verisimilitude of authentic history. The *Reali*, for example, opens with this sentence: 'Fuvvi in Roma un santo pastore della Chiesa, che aveva nome papa Silvestro.' The *Fioravante*, recently edited by Signor Rajna, begins: 'Nel tempo che Gostantino imperadore regiea & mantenea corte in Roma grandissima.' This parade of historic seriousness, observed by the subsequent romantic poets, contributed in no small

measure to the irony at which they aimed. But with the story-tellers of the *quattrocento* it was no mere affectation. Like their predecessors of the fourteenth century, they treated legend from the standpoint of experience. It was due in no small measure to this circumstance that the Italian prose-romances are devoid of charm. Nowhere do we find in them that magic touch of poetry which makes the forests, seas and castles of the 'Mort d' Arthur' enchanted ground. Notwithstanding all their extravagances, they remain positive in spirit, presenting the material of fancy in the sober garb of fact. The Italian genius lacked a something of imaginative potency possessed in overflowing measure by the Northern nations. It required the stimulus of satire, the infusion of idyllic sentiment, the consciousness of art, to raise the romantic epic to the height it reached in Ariosto. Then, and not till then, when the matter of the legend had become the sport of the æsthetic sense, were the inexhaustible riches of Italian fancy, dealing delicately and humorously with a subject which could no longer be apprehended seriously, revealed to the world in a masterpiece of beauty. But that work of consummate art was what it was, by reason of the master's wise employment of a style transmitted to him through generations of plebeian predecessors.

The same positive and workmanly method is discernible in the versified *novelle* of this period.[1] The

[1] See *I Novellieri Italiani in Verso* by Giamb. Passano (Romagnoli, 1868). The whole *Decameron* was turned into octave stanzas by V. Brugiantino, and published by Marcolini at Venice in 1554. Among *Novelle* versified for popular reading may be cited, *Masetto the Gardener* (*Decam.* Giorn. iii. 1), *Romeo and Juliet* (Verona, 1553), *Il Grasso, Legnai-*

popular poets were wont to recast tales from the Decameron and other sources in octave stanzas. Of such compositions we have excellent specimens in Girolamo Benivieni's version of the novel of Tancredi, and in an anonymous rhymed paraphrase of Patient Grizzel.[1] The latter is especially interesting when we compare it with the series of panels attributed to Pinturicchio in the National Gallery, where a painter of the same period has exercised his fancy in illustrating the legend which the poet versified. Detached episodes of semi-mythical Florentine history were similarly treated. Allusion has already been made to the love-tale of Ippolito and Leonora, attributed on doubtful grounds to Alberti.[2] But by far the most beautiful is the story of Ginevra degli Almieri, told in octave stanzas by Agostino Velletti.[3] This poem has rare value as a genuine product of the plebeian muse. The heroine Ginevra's father was a pork-butcher, says

uolo (by B. Davanzati, Florence, 1480), *Prasildo and Lisbina* (from the *Orlando Innamorato*), *Oliva, Fiorio e Biancifiore* (the tale of the *Filocopo*). Of classical tales we find *Sesto Tarquinio et Lucretia, Orpheo, Perseo, Piramo, Giasone e Medea.*

[1] *Tancredi Principe di Salerno*, Bologna, Romagnoli, 1863. *Il Marchese di Saluzzo e la Griselda*, Bologna, Romagnoli, 1862.

[2] See above, p. 212. The literary hesitations of an age as yet uncertain of its aim might be illustrated from these romances. Of *Ippolito e Leonora* we have a prose, an *ottava rima*, and a Latin version. Of *Griselda* we have Boccaccio's Italian, and Petrarch's Latin prose, in addition to the anonymous *ottava rima* version. Of the *Principe di Salerno* we have Boccaccio's Italian, and Lionardo Bruni's Latin versions in prose, together with Filippo Beroaldo's Latin elegiacs, Francesco di Michele Accolti's *terza rima* and Benivieni's octave stanzas. Lami in his *Novelle letterarie* (Bologna, Romagnoli, 1859) prints an Italian *novella* on the same story, which he judges anterior to the *Decameron*. Later on, Annibal Guasco produced another *ottava rima* version; and the tale was used by several playwrights in the composition of tragedies.

[3] *La Storia di Ginevra Almieri che fu sepolta viva in Firenze* (Pisa, Nistri, 1863).

the minstrel, and lived in the Marcato Vecchio, where he carried on the best business of the sort in Florence. It is also important for students of comparative literature, because it clearly illustrates the difference between Italian and Northern treatment of an all but contemporary incident. The events narrated are supposed to have really happened in the year 1396. On the Scotch Border they would have furnished materials for a ballad similar to Gil Morrice or Clerk Saunders. In Florence they take the form of a *novella*, and the *novella* is expanded in octave stanzas.[1] Ginevra had two lovers, Antonio de' Rondinelli and Francesco degli Agolanti. Antonio loved her the more tenderly; but her parents gave her in marriage to Francesco. Soon after the ceremony, she sickened and fell into a trance; and since Florence was then threatened with the plague, the girl was buried over-hastily in this deep slumber. Her weeping parents laid her in a cippus or *avello* between the two doors of S. Reparata, where the workmen, unable to finish their job before sunset, left the lid of her sepulchre unsoldered. In the middle of the night Ginevra woke, and discovered to her horror that she had been sent to the grave alive. Happily the moon was shining, and a ray of light fell through a chink upon her bier. She arose, wrapped her shroud around her, and struggled from her marble chest into the silent cathedral square. Giotto's bell-tower rose above her, silvery and beautiful, and slender in the moonlight. Like a ghost,

[1] The same point is illustrated by the tales of the Marchese di Saluzzo and the Principe di Salerno, which produced the novels of *Griselda* and *Tancredi*. See notes to p. 250, above.

sheeted in her grave-clothes, Ginevra ran through the streets, and knocked first at Francesco's door. He was seated awake by the fireside, sorrowing for his young bride's loss:

> Andonne alla finestra e aprilla un poco:
> Chi è là? Chi batte? Io son la tua Ginevra;
> Non m'odi tu? Col suo parlar persevera.

Her husband doubts not that it is a spirit calling to him, bids her rest till masses shall be said for her repose, and shuts the window. Then she turns to her mother's house. The mother, too, is sitting sorrowful by the hearth, when she is startled by Ginevra's cry:

> E spaventata e piena di paura
> Disse: va in pace, anima benedetta,
> Bella figliuola mia, onesta e pura;
> E riserrò la finestra con fretta.

Rejected by husband and mother, Ginevra next tries her uncle, and calls on him for succour in God's name:

> Fugli risposto; anima benedetta,
> Va che Dio ti conservi in santa pace.

The poor wretch now feels that there is nothing left for her but to lie down on the pavement and die of cold. But while she is preparing herself for this fate, she bethinks her of Antonio. To his house she hurries, cries for aid, and falls exhausted on the doorstep. Then comes the finest touch in the poem. Antonio knows Ginevra's voice; and loving her so tenderly, he hurries with delight to greet her risen from the grave. He alone has no fear and no misgiving; for love in him is stronger than death. At the street door, when

he reaches it, he finds no ghost, but his own dear lady yet alive. She is half frozen and unconscious; yet her heart still beats. How he calls the women of his household to attend her, prepares a bed, and feeds her with warm soups and wine, and how she revives, and how Antonio claims her for his wife, and wins his cause against her former bridegroom in the Bishop's court, may be read at length in the concluding portion of the tale. The intrinsic pathos of this story makes it a real poem; for though the wizard's wand of Northern imagination lay beyond the grasp of the Italian genius, the *novelle* are rarely deficient in poetry evoked by sympathy with injured innocence and loyal love.

Of truly popular *novelle* belonging to the fifteenth century, none is racier or more characteristic than the anonymous tale of *Il Grasso, Legnaiuolo*.[1] It is written in pure Florentine dialect, and might be selected as the finest extant specimen of homespun Tuscan humour. We have already seen that the point of Sacchetti's stories is nearly always a practical joke, where comedy combines with heartless cruelty in almost equal parts. The theme of *Il Grasso* is a superlatively comic *beffa* of this sort, played by Filippo Brunelleschi on a friend of his. The incident is dated 1409, and is supposed to have really occurred. Manetto Ammannatini, a *tarsiatore* or worker in carved and inlaid wood, was called *Il Grasso*, because he was a fine stout fellow of twenty-eight years. He had his *bottega* on the Piazza S. Giovanni and lived with his brother in a house hard by. Among his most intimate associates were Filippo

[1] *Raccolta dei Novellieri Italiani*, vol. xiii.

di Ser Brunellesco, Donatello, *intagliatore di marmi*, Giovanni di Messer Francesco Rucellai, and others, partly gentlemen and partly handicraftsmen; for there was no abrupt division of classes at Florence, and this story shows how artisans and men of high condition dwelt together in good fellowship. The practical joke devised by Brunelleschi consisted in persuading Manetto that he had been changed into a certain Matteo. The whole society of friends were in the secret, and the affair was so cunningly conducted that at last they attained the desired object. They caused Manetto to be arrested for a debt of Matteo, sent Matteo's brothers and then the clergyman of the parish to reason with him on his spendthrift habits, and fooled him so that he fairly lost his sense of identity. The whole series of incidents, beginning with Manetto's indignant assertion of his proper personality, passing through his doubts, and closing with his mystification, is conducted by fine gradations of irresistibly comic humour. At last the poor man resolves to quit Florence and to seek refuge with King Mathias Corvinus in Hungary; which it seems he subsequently did, in company with a certain Lo Spano. There is no reason to suppose that this practical joke did not actually take place.

I have enlarged upon the *novella* of *Il Grasso*, because it is typical of the genuinely popular literature, written to delight the folk of Florence, appealing to their subtlest as well as broadest sense of fun, and bringing on the scene two famous artists, Brunelleschi, whose cupola is 'raised above the heavens,' and Donatello, whose S. George seems stepping from his pedestal to challenge all the evil of the world and conquer

it. Unfortunately, our published collections are not rich in novels of this date; and next to the anonymous tale of *Il Grasso, Legnaiuolo* it is difficult to cite one of at all equal value, till we come to Luigi Pulci's story of Messer Goro and Pius II. This is really a satire on the Sienese, whom Pulci represents with Florentine malice as almost inconceivably silly. The Tuscan style is piquant in the extreme, and the picture of manners very brilliant.[1]

From epical and narrative literature to poems written for the people upon contemporary events and public history, is not an unnatural transition. These compositions divide themselves into *Storie* and *Lamenti*. We have abundant examples of both kinds in lyric measures and also in octave stanzas and *terza rima*.[2] A few of their titles will suffice to indicate their scope. *Il Lamento di Giuliano de' Medici* relates the tragic ending of the Pazzi conspiracy; *Il Lamento del Duca Galeazzo Maria* tells how that Duke was murdered in the church of S. Stefano at Milan; *El Lamento di Otranto* is an echo of the disaster which shook all Italy to her foundations in the year 1480; *El Lamento e la Discordia de Italia universale* sounds the death-note of Italian freedom in the last years of the century. After that period the *Pianti* and *Lamenti*, attesting to the sorrows of a nation, increase in frequency until all voices from the people are hushed

[1] *Op. cit.* vol. xiii. An allusion to Masuccio in this novel is interesting, since it proves the influence he had acquired even in Florence: 'Masuccio, grande onore della città di Salerno, molto imitatore del nostro messer Giovanni Boccaccio,' *ib.* p. 34. Pulci goes on to say that the reading of the *Novellino* had encouraged him to write his tale.

[2] See D'Ancona, *La Poesia Popolare Italiana*, pp. 64-79.

in the leaden sleep of Spanish despotism.[1] The *Storie* in like manner are more abundant between the years 1494 and 1530, when the wars of foreign invaders supplied the bards of the market-place with continual matter for improvisation. Among the earliest may be mentioned two poems on the Battle of Anghiari and the taking of Serezana.[2] Then the list proceeds with the tale of the Borgias, *Guerre Orrende, Rotta di Ravenna, Mali deportamenti de Franciosi fato in Italia,* and so forth, till it ends with *La Presa di Roma* and *Rotta di Ferruccio.* A last echo of these *Storie* and *Lamenti*—for alas! in Italy of the sixteenth century history and lamentation were all one—still sounds about the hillsides of Siena[3]:

O Piero Strozzi, 'ndù sono i tuoi bravoni?
Al Poggio delle Donne in que' burroni.
O Piero Strozzi, 'ndù sono i tuoi soldati?
Al Poggio delle Donne in quei fossati.
O Piero Strozzi, 'ndù son le tue genti?
Al Poggio delle Donne a côr le lenti.

It may be well to say how these poems reached the people, before they were committed to writing or the press. There existed a professional class of rhymesters, usually blind men, if we may judge by the frequent affix of *Cieco* to their names, who tuned their guitar in the streets, and when a crowd had gathered round them, broke into some legend of

[1] A fine example of these later *Lamenti* has been republished at Bologna by Romagnoli, 1864. It is the *Lamento di Fiorenza* upon the siege and slavery of 1529–30.

[2] A medieval specimen of this species of composition is the *Ballata* for the *Reali di Napoli* in the defeat of Montecatini. See Carducci's *Cino e Altri*, p. 603.

[3] D'Ancona, *op. cit.* p. 78.

romance, or told a tale of national misfortune. The Italian designation of these minstrels is *Cantatore in Banca* or *Cantore di piazza*. In the high tide of Florentine freedom the *Cantore di piazza* exercised a noble calling; for through his verse the voice of the common folk made itself heard beneath the very windows of the Signoria. In 1342, when the war with Pisa turned against the Florentines owing to the incompetence of their generals, Antonio Pucci, who was the most celebrated *Cantatore* of the day, took his lute and placed himself upon the steps beneath the Palazzo, and having invoked the Virgin Mary, struck up a *Sermintese* on the duty of making peace[1]:

Signor, pognàm ch' i' sia di vil nascenza,
I' pur nacqui nel corpo di Firenza,
Come qual c' è di più sofficienza:
Onde 'l mi duole
Di lei, considerando che esser suole
Tenuta più che madre da figliuole;
Oggi ogni bestia soggiogar la vuole
E occupare.

Other poems of the same kind by Antonio Pucci belong to the year 1346, or celebrate the purchase of Lucca from Mastino della Scala, or the victory of Messer Piero Rosso at Padua, or the expulsion of the Duke of Athens from Florence in 1348. It must not be supposed that the *Cantatori in Banca* of the next century

[1] *Sermintese Storico di A. Pucci*, Livorno, Vigo, 1876. It will be remembered that Dante in the *Vita Nuova* (section vi.) says he composed a *Serventese* on sixty ladies of Florence. The name was derived from Provence, and altered into *Sermintese* by the Florentines. We possess a poem of this sort by A. Pucci on the Florentine ladies, printed by D' Ancona in his edition of the *Vita Nuova* (Pisa, Nistri, p. 71), together with a valuable discourse upon this form of poetry. Carducci in his *Cino e Altri* prints two *Sermintesi* by Pucci on the beauties of women.

enjoyed so much liberty of censure or had so high a sense of their vocation as Antonio Pucci. Yet the people made their opinions freely heard in rhymes sung even by the children through the streets, as when they angered Martin V. in 1420 by crying beneath his very windows[1]:

Papa Martino, Signor di Piombino,
Conte de Urbino, non vale un quattrino.

During the ascendancy of Savonarola and the party-struggles of the Medici the rival cries of *Palle* and *Viva Cristo Rè* were turned into street songs[2]; but at last, after the siege and the victory of Clement, the voice of the people was finally stifled by authority.[3]

The element of satire in these ditties of the people leads me to speak of one very prominent poet of the fifteenth century—Domenico di Giovanni, called Il Burchiello, the rhyming barber.[4] He was born

[1] D'Ancona, *Poesia Popolare Italiana*, pp. 47–50, has collected from Leonardo Bruno and other sources many interesting facts about Pope Martin's anger at this ditty. He seems to have gone to the length of putting Florence under an interdict.

[2] D'Ancona, *op. cit.* pp. 51–56.

[3] One of the last plebeian rhymes on politics comes from Siena, where, in the year 1552, the people used to sing this couplet in derision of the Cardinal of the Mignanelli family sent to rule them:

Mignanello, Mignanello,
Non ci piace il tuo modello.

See Benci's *Storia di Montepulciano* (Fiorenza, Massi e Landi, 1641), p. 194. An anecdote from Busini (*Lettere al Varchi*, Firenze, Le Monnier, p. 220) is so characteristic of the popular temper under the oppression of Spanish tyranny that its indecency may be excused. He says that a law had been passed awarding, 'quattro tratti di corda ad uno che, tirando una c . . . . . disse: Poi che non si può parlare con la bocca, io parlerò col c . . . . . .'

[4] See the work entitled *Sulle Poesie Toscane di Domenico il Burchiello nel secolo xv*, G. Gargani, Firenze, Tip. Cenn. 1877.

probably in 1403 at Florence, where his father, who was a Pisan, had acquired the rights of citizenship and followed the trade of a barber. Their shop was situated in Calimala, and formed a meeting-place for the wits, who carried Burchiello's verses over the town. The boy seems to have studied at Pisa, and acquired some slight knowledge of medicine.[1] At the age of four-and-twenty we find him married, with three children and no property.[2] Soon after this date, he separated from his wife; or else she left him on account of his irregular and dissolute habits. Peering through the obscurity of his somewhat sordid history, we see him getting into trouble with the Inquisition on account of profane speech, and then espousing the cause of the Albizzi against the Medicean faction. On the return of Cosimo de' Medici in 1434, Burchiello was obliged to leave Florence. He settled at Siena, and opened a shop in the Corso di Camollia, hoping to attract the Florentines whose business brought them to that quarter. Here he nearly ruined his health by debauchery, and narrowly escaped assassination at the hands of a certain Ser Rosello.[3] Leaving Siena about 1440, Burchiello spent the last years of his life in wandering through the cities of Italy. We hear of him at Venice entertained by one of the Alberti family, then at Naples, finally in

[1] Intendi a me, che già studiai a Pisa,
E ogni mal conosco senza signo.
Sonetti del Burchiello, del Bellincioni, e d' altri, 1757, Londra, p. 125. See, too, the whole sonnet *Son medico in volgar.*

[2] Gargani, *op. cit.* p. 23, extract from the *Catasto*, 1427: 'Domenicho di Giovanni barbiere non ha nulla.'

[3] The parallel between these passages of Burchiello's life and Filelfo's at the same period is singular. See *Revival of Learning*, p. 275.

Rome, where he died in 1448, poisoned probably by Robert, a bastard of Pandolfo Sigismondo Malatesta, at the instigation of his ancient enemy, Cosimo de' Medici.[1] Such long arms and such retentive memory had the merchant despot.

Burchiello's sonnets were collected some thirty years after his death and published simultaneously at various places.[2] They owed their popularity partly to their political subject-matter, but more to their strange humour. A foreigner can scarcely understand their language, far less appreciate their fun; for not only are they composed in Florentine slang of the fifteenth century, but this slang itself consists of detached phrases and burlesque allusions, chipped as it were from current speech, broken into splinters, and then wrought into a grotesque mosaic. That Burchiello had the merit of originality, and that he caught the very note of plebeian utterance, is manifest from the numerous editions and imitations of his sonnets.[3] His Muse was a *volvivaga Venus* bred among the taverns and low haunts of vulgar company, whose biting wit introduced her to the society of the learned. Yet her utterances, at this distance of time, are so obscure and their point has been so blunted that to profess an admiration for Burchiello savours of literary affectation.[4] He was a poet of the transition; and the

[1] Gargani, *op. cit.* p. 90.

[2] The best edition bears the date Londra, 1757.

[3] The edition cited above includes *Sonetti alla Burchiellesca* by a variety of writers. The strange book called *Pataffio*, which used to be ascribed to Brunetto Latini, seems born of similar conditions.

[4] Florentines themselves take this view, as is proved by the following sentence from Capponi: 'E pure qui obbligo di registrare anche il Burchiello, barbiere di nome rimasto famoso, perchè fece d' un certo suo

burlesque style which he made popular was destined to be superseded by the more refined and subtle Bernesque manner. Il Lasca, writing in the sixteenth century, expressed himself strongly against those who still ventured to compare Burchiello with the author of *Le Pesche.* 'Let no one talk to me of Burchiello; to rank him with Berni is no better than to couple the fiend Charon with the Angel Gabriel.'[1]

Not the least important branch of popular poetry in its bearing on the future of Italian literature was the strictly lyrical. In treating of these Volkslieder, it will be necessary to consider them under the two aspects of secular and religious—the former destined to supply Poliziano and Lorenzo de' Medici with models for their purest works of literary art, the latter containing the germs of the Florentine Sacred Play within the strophes of a hymn.

If we return to the golden days of the fourteenth century, we find that Dante's, Boccaccio's and Sacchetti's *Ballate* descended to the people and were easily adapted to their needs.[2] Minute comparison of Dante's dance-song of the *Ghirlandetta* with the version in use among the common folk will show what slight alterations were needed in order to render it the

gergo poesia forse arguta ma triviale; oscura oggi, ma popolare nei tempi suoi e che ebbe inclusive imitatori' (*Storia della Rep. di Firenze,* ii. 176).

[1] See the Sonnet quoted in Note 59 to Mazzuchelli's Life of Berni, *Scrittori d' Italia,* vol iv.

[2] The *Ballata* or *Canzone a Ballo,* as its name implies, was a poem intended to be sung during the dance. A musician played the lute while young women executed the movements of the Carola (so beautifully depicted by Benozzo Gozzoli in his Pisan frescoes), alone or in the company of young men, singing the words of the song. The *Ballata* consisted of lyric stanzas with a recurrent couplet. It is difficult to distinguish the *Ballate* from the *Canzonette d' Amore.*

property of 'prentice lads and spinning maidens, and at the same time how subtle those changes were.[1] Dante's song might be likened to a florin fresh from the mint; the popular ditty to the same coin after it has circulated for a year or two, exchanging something of its sharp lines for the smoothness of currency and usage. The same is true of Boccaccio's Ballata, *Il fior che 'l valor perde*; except that here the transformation has gone deeper, and, if such a criticism may be hazarded, has bettered the original by rendering the sentiment more universal.[2] Sacchetti's charming song *O vaghe montanine pasturelle* underwent the same process of metamorphosis before it assumed the form in which it passed for a composition of Poliziano.[3] Starting with poems of this quality, the rhymesters of the market-place had noble models, and the use they made of them was adequate. We cannot from the wreck of time recover very many that were absolutely written for the people by the people; but we can judge of their quality by Angelo Poliziano's imitations.[4] He borrowed so largely from all sources, and his debts can be so accurately traced in his *rispetti*, that it is fair to credit the popular Muse with even such delicate work as *La Brunettina*, while the disputed authorship of the May-song *Ben venga Maggio* and of the Ballata *Vaghe le montanine e pastorelle* is sufficient to prove at least their widespread fame.[5] Whoever wrote them,

[1] See Carducci, *Cantilene e Ballate* (Pisa, 1871), pp. 82, 83.

[2] *Ibid.* pp. 171–173.

[3] *Ibid.* pp. 214–217.

[4] A volume of ancient *Canzoni a Ballo* was published at Florence in 1562, by Sermatelli, and again in 1568.

[5] *Le Rime di Messer A. Poliziano*, pp. 295, 346.

they became the heirlooms of the people. If proof were needed of the vast number of such compositions in the fifteenth century—erotic, humorous, and not unfrequently obscene—it might be derived from the rubrics of the *Laude* or hymns, which were almost invariably parodies of popular dance-songs and intended to be sung to the same tunes.[1] Every festivity —May-morning tournaments, summer evening dances on the squares of Florence, weddings, carnival processions, and vintage-banquets at the villa—had their own lyrics accompanied with music and the Carola.

The dance-songs and canzonets, of which we have been speaking, were chiefly of town growth and Tuscan. Another kind of popular love-poem, common to all the dialects of Italy, may be regarded as a special production of the country. Much has lately been written concerning these *Rispetti*, *Strambotti* and *Stornelli*.[2] Ample collections have been made to

[1] See *Laude Spirituali di Feo Belcari e di Altri*, Firenze, 1863. The hymn *Crocifisso a capo chino*, for example, has this heading: 'Cantasi come—Una donna d' amor fino,' which was by no means a moral song (*ib.* p. 16). D' Ancona in his *Poesia Pop. It.* pp. 431–436, has extracted the titles of these profane songs, some of which are to be found in the *Canzoni a Ballo* (Firenze, 1568), and *Canti Carnascialeschi* (Cosmopoli, 1750), while the majority are lost.

[2] The books which I have consulted on this branch of vernacular poetry are (1) Tommaseo, *Canti popolari toscani, corsi, illirici e greci*, Venezia, 1841. (2) Tigri, *Canti popolari toscani*, Firenze, 1869. (3) Pitré, *Canti popolari siciliani*, and *Studi di poesia popolare*, Palermo, 1870–1872. (4) D' Ancona, *La Poesia popolare italiana*, Livorno, 1878. (5) Rubieri, *Storia della poesia popolare italiana*, Firenze, 1877. Also numerous collections of local songs, of which a good list is furnished in D' Ancona's work just cited. Bolza's edition of Comasque poetry, Dal Medico's of Venetian, Ferraro's of *Canti Monferrini* (district of Montferrat), Vigo's of Sicilian, together with Imbriani's of Southern and Marcoaldo's of Central dialects, deserve to be specially cited. The literature in question is already voluminous, and bids fair to receive considerable additions.

illustrate their local peculiarities. Their points of resemblance and dissimilarity have been subjected to critical analysis, and great ingenuity has been expended on the problem of their origin. It will be well to preface what has to be said about them with some explanation of terms. There are, to begin with, two distinct species. The *Stornello*, *Ritornello* or *Fiore*, called also *Ciure* in Sicily, properly consists of two or three verses starting with the name of a flower. Thus [1]:

Fior di Granato !
Bella, lo nome tuo sta scritto in cielo,
Lo mio sta scritto sull' onda del mare.

Rispetto and *Strambotto* are two names for the same kind of song, which in the north-eastern provinces is also called *Villotta* and in Sicily *Canzune*.[2] Strictly speaking, the term *Strambotto* should be confined to literary imitations of the popular *Rispetto*. In Tuscany the lyric in question consists, in its normal form, of four alternately rhyming hendecasyllabic lines, followed by what is technically called the *ripresa*, or repetition, which may be composed of two, four, or even more verses. Though not strictly an octave stanza, it sometimes falls into this shape, and has then two pairs of three alternate rhymes, finished up with a couplet.

[1] I take this example at random from Blessig's *Römische Ritornelle* (Leipzig, 1860), p. 48 :

Flower of Pomegranate tree !
Your name, O my fair one, is written in heaven ;
My name it is writ on the waves of the sea.

[2] The term *Villotta* or *Vilota* is special, I believe, to Venice and the Friuli. D' Ancona identifies it with *Rispetto*, Rubieri with *Stornello*. But it has the character of a quatrain, and seems therefore more properly to belong to the former.

In the following instance the quatrain and the *ripresa* are well marked[1]:

Quando sarà quel benedetto giorno,
Che le tue scale salirò pian piano?
I tuoi fratelli mi verranno intorno,
Ad un ad un gli toccherò la mano.
Quando sarà quel dì, cara colonna,
Che la tua mamma chiamerò madonna?
Quando sarà quel dì, caro amor mio?
Io sarò vostra, e voi sarete mio!

In Sicily the *Canzune* exhibits a stanza of eight lines rhyming alternately throughout upon two sounds. Certain peculiarities, however, in the structure of the strophe render it probable that it was originally a quatrain followed by a *ripresa* of the same length. Thus[2]:

Quannu nascisti tu, stidda lucenti,
'N terra calaru tri ancili santi;
Vinniru li Tri Re d' Orienti,
Purtannu cosi d' oru e di brillanti;
Tri àculi vularu prestamenti,
Dannu la nova a punenti e a livanti;

[1] Tigri, p. 123. Translated by me thus:

Ah, when will dawn that blissful day
When I shall softly mount your stair,
Your brothers meet me on the way,
And one by one I greet them there!
When comes the day, my staff, my strength,
To call your mother mine at length?
When will the day come, love of mine,
I shall be yours and you be mine?

[2] Pitrè, vol. i. p. 185. Translated by me thus, with an alteration in the last couplet:

When thou wert born, O beaming star!
Three holy angels flew to earth;
The three kings from the East afar
Brought gold and jewels of great worth;
Three eagles on wings light as air
Bore the news East and West and North.
O jewel fair, O jewel rare,
So glad was heaven to greet thy birth.

Bella, lí to' billizzi su' putenti !
Avi nov' anni chi ti sugnu amanti.

In the north-east the *Villotta* consists of a simple quatrain. Of this form the following is an example [1]:

Quanti ghe n' è, che me sente a cantare,
E i dise ;—Custia canta dal bon tempo.—
Che prego 'l ciel che me possa agiutare ;
Quando che canto, alora me lamento.

Though these are the leading types of the *Rispetto*, *Canzune* and *Villotta*, each district exhibits a variety of subordinate and complex forms. The same may be said about the *Stornello*, *Ritornello* and *Ciure*. The names, too, are very variously applied; nor without pedantry would it be possible to maintain perfect precision in their usage.[2] It is enough to have indicated the two broad classes into which popular poetry of this kind is divided. For the future I shall refer to the one sort as *Rispetti*, to the other as *Stornelli*.

Comparative analysis makes it clear that the *Rispetti* and *Stornelli* scattered over all the provinces of Italy, constitute a common fund. That is to say, we do not meet with the *Rispetti* of each dialect confined to their own region ; but the same original *Rispetto*, perhaps now lost to sight, has been adapted and transformed to suit the taste and idiom of the several pro-

[1] Dalmedico, *Canti Ven.* p. 69 :

Many there are who when they hear me sing,
Cry : There goes one whose joy runs o'er in song !
But I pray God to give me succouring ;
For when I sing, 'tis then I grieve full strong.

[2] For instance, *Rispetti* in the valley of the Po are called *Romanelle*. In some parts of Central Italy the *Stornello* becomes *Mottetto* or *Raccommandare*. The little Southern lyrics known as *Arii* and *Ariette* at Naples and in Sicily, are elsewhere called *Villanelle* or *Napolitane* and *Siciliane*. It is clear that in this matter of nomenclature great exactitude cannot be sought.

vinces. To reconstitute the primitive type, to decide with certainty in each case the true source of these lyrics, is probably impossible. All we know for certain is that beneath apparent dialectical divergences the vulgar poetry of the Italians presents unmistakeable signs of identity.[1] Which province was the primitive home of the *Rispetti*; whether Sicily, where the faculty for reproducing them is still most vivid[2]; or Tuscany, where they certainly attain their purest form and highest beauty; or whether all Italian country districts have contributed their quota to the general stock; are difficult questions, as yet by no means satisfactorily decided. Professor d' Ancona advances a theory, which is too plausible to be ignored in silence. *Rispetti*, he suggests, were first produced in Sicily, whence they travelled through Central Italy, receiving dialectical transmutation in Tuscany, and there also attaining to the perfection of their structure.[3] Numerous slight indications lead to the conclusion that their original linguistic type was southern. The imagery also which is common in verses sung to this day by the peasants of the Pistoja highlands, including frequent references to the sea with metaphors borrowed from orange-trees and palms, seems to indicate a Sicilian birthplace.[4] We have, moreover, the early evidence

[1] The proofs adduced by D' Ancona in his *Poesia popolare*, pp. 177–284, seem to me conclusive on this point.

[2] See Pitrè, *Studi di Poesia popolare* (Palermo, Lauriel, 1872), two essays on 'I Poeti del Popolo Siciliano,' and 'Pietro Fullone e le sfide popolari,' pp. 81–184. He gives particulars relating to contemporary improvisations. See, too, the Essays by L. Vigo, *Opere* (Catania, 1870–74), vol. ii.

[3] *Op. cit.* pp. 285, 288–294.

[4] I may refer at large to Tigri's collection, and to my translations of these *Rispetti* in *Sketches in Italy and Greece*.

of six *Napolitane* copied from a Magliabecchian MS. of the fourteenth century, which exhibit the transition from southern to Tuscan idiom and structure.[1] One of these still exists in several dialects, under the title of *La Rondinella importuna*.[2] It is therefore certain that many *Rispetti* are very ancient, dating from the Suabian period, when Sicilian poetry, as we have seen, underwent the process of *toscaneggiamento*. However, D' Ancona's theory is too hypothetical, and it may also be said, too neat, to be accepted without reservation.

One point, at any rate, may be considered certain. Though the *Rispetti* are still alive upon the lips of *contadini*; though we may hear them echoing from farm and field through all the length and breadth of Italy; though the voluminous collections we possess have recently been gathered from *viva voce* recitation; yet they are perhaps as ancient as the dialects. The proof of this antiquity lies in the fact that whether we take the literary *Strambotti* of Poliziano for our standard, or the *pasticci*, *incatenature* and *intrecciature* of the sixteenth century for guides, we find the phrases and the style that are familiar to us in the rural lyrics of to-day.[3] Bronzino's *Serenata* and the *Incatenatura*

[1] Carducci, *Cantilene*, p. 57.

[2] See Rubieri, *Storia della poesia popolare*, pp. 352–356, for a selection of variants.

[3] The terms employed above require some illustration. Poliziano's Canzonet, *La pastorella si leva per tempo*, is a *pasticcio* composed of fragments from popular songs in vogue at his day. We possess three valuable poems—one by Bronzino, published in 1567; one by Il Cieco Bianchino of Florence, published at Verona in 1629; the third by Il Cieco Britti of Venice, published in the same year—which consist of extracts from popular lyrics united together by the rhymester. Hence their name *incatenatura*. See Rubieri, *op. cit.* pp. 212, 121, 130. See, too, D' Ancona, *op. cit.* pp. 100–105, 146–172, for the text and copious illustrations from contemporary sources of Bronzino's and Il Cieco Bianchino's poems.

of Bianchino contain, embedded in their structure, ditties which were universally known in the sixteenth century, and which are being sung still with unimportant alterations by the people. The attention of learned men was directed in the renascence of Tuscan literature to the beauty of these lyrics. Poliziano, writing to Lorenzo de' Medici in 1488, and describing his journey with Pietro through Montepulciano and Acquapendente in the month of May, says that he and his companions amused themselves with *rappresaglie* or adaptations of the songs they heard upon the way.[1] His road took him through what is still one of the best sources of local verse and music; and we may believe that at the close of the fifteenth century, the *contadini* of that district were singing nearly the same words as now. Nor, when we examine the points of similarity and difference in the Italian *Rispetti* and *Stornelli*, as they now exist, is there anything improbable in this antiquity. Nothing but great age can account for their adaptation to the tone, feeling, fancy, habits and language of so many regions. It must have taken more than a century or two to rub down their original angles, to efface the specific stamp of their birthplace, and to make them pass for home productions in Venice no less than Palermo, in Tuscan Montalcino and Ligurian Chiavari.

The retentiveness of the popular memory, before it has been spoiled by education, is quite sufficient to

[1] *Prose Volgari, etc., di A. A. Poliziano* (Firenze, Barbèra, 1867), p. 74. 'Siamo tutti allegri, e facciamo buona cera, e becchiamo per tutta la via di qualche rappresaglia e Canzone di Calen di Maggio, che mi sono parute più fantastiche qui in Acquapendente, alla Romanesca, vel nota ipsa vel argumento.'

account for the preservation of these lyrics through several hundred years. Nor need their wide diffusion suggest difficulties. Italy in the middle ages offered readier means of intercommunication between the inhabitants of her provinces than she has done since the settlement of the country in 1530. When the liberation of the Communes gave a new impulse to intellectual and commercial activity, there began a steady and continually increasing movement from one city to another. Commercial enterprise led the burghers of Pisa, Lucca, Florence, Venice, Genoa, to establish themselves as bankers and middle-men, brokers and manufacturers, in Rome and Naples. Soldiers of adventure flocked from the south, and made the northern towns their temporary home. The sanctuaries of Gargano, Loretto and Assisi drew pilgrims from all quarters. Noblemen of Romagna acted as *podestà* beyond the Apennines, while Lombards opened shops in Palermo. Churchmen bred upon the Riviera wore the mitre in the March; natives of the Spoletano taught in the schools of Bologna and Pavia. Men of letters, humanists and artists had no fixed dwelling-place, but wandered, like mercenary soldiers, from town to town in search of better pay. Students roamed from school to school according as the fame of great professors drew them. Party-quarrels in the commonwealths drove whole families, such as the Florentine Uberti, Alberti, Albizzi, Strozzi, into exile. Conquered cities, like Pisa, sent forth their burghers by hundreds as emigrants, too proud to bear the yoke of foes they had resisted. Nor were the Courts of princes without their influence in mingling the natives

of different districts. Whether, then, we study the *Novelle*, or the histories of great houses, or the biographies of eminent Italians, or the records of the universities, we shall be led to the conclusion that from the year 1200 to the year 1550 there was a perpetual and lively intercourse by land and sea between the departments of Italy. This reciprocity of influence did not cease until the two despotic races, Austrian and Spaniard, threw each separate province into solitary chains. Such being the conditions of social exchange at the epoch when the language was in process of formation, there is nothing strange in finding the rural poetry of the south acclimatised in central and northern Italy. But the very facility of communication and the probable antiquity of these lyrics should make us cautious in adopting any rigid hypothesis about their origin. It is reasonable to suppose that such transferable property as love-poems might have been everywhere produced and rapidly diffused, the best from each centre surviving by a natural process of selection. Lastly, whatever view may be taken of their formation and their age, we have every reason to believe that the fifteenth century was a fruitful period of production and accumulation. Toward the close of the *quattrocento* they attracted the curiosity of lettered poets, who began to imitate them, and in the next hundred years they were committed in large numbers to the press.[1]

[1] See D'Ancona, *op. cit.* pp. 354–420, for copious and interesting notices of the popular press in several Italian towns. The *Avallone* of Naples, *Cordella* of Venice, *Marescandoli* of Florence, *Bertini* and *Baroni* of Lucca, *Colomba* of Bologna, all served the special requirements of the proletariate in town and country. G. B. Verini of Florence made

In addition to the influence exercised by these popular lyrics over polite literature in the golden age of the Renaissance, extraordinary interest attaches to them as an indigenous species of verse, dating from remote antiquity and still surviving in all corners of the country. In them we analyse the Italian poetic genius at its source and under its most genuine conditions. Both from their qualities and their defects inferences may be drawn, which find application and illustration in the solemn works of laurelled singers. The one theme of *Rispetti* and *Stornelli* is love; but love in all its phases and with all its retinue of associated emotions—expectation, fruition, disappointment, jealousy, despair, rejection, treachery, desertion, pleading, scorn—the joys of presence, the pangs of absence, the ecstasy of union, the agony of parting—love, natural and unaffected, turbulent or placid, chaste or troubled with desire, imperious or humble, tempestuously passionate or toned to tranquil acquiescence—love varying through all moods and tempers, yet never losing its note of spontaneity, sincerity and truth. The instincts of the people are pure, and their utterances of affection are singularly free from grossness. This at least is almost universally the case with lyrics gathered from the country. Approaching town-life, they lose their delicacy; and the products of the city

anthologies called *L' Ardor d' Amore* and *Crudeltà d' Amore* in the sixteenth century, both of which are still reprinted. The same is true of the *Olimpia* and *Gloria* of Olimpo degli Alessandri of Sassoferrato. The subordinate titles commonly used in these popular Golden Treasuries are, 'Canzoni di amore,' 'di gelosia,' 'di sdegno,' 'di pace e di partenza.' Their classification and description appear from the following rubrics: 'Mattinate,' 'Serenate,' 'Partenze,' 'Strambotti, 'Sdegni,' 'Sonetti,' 'Villanelle,' 'Lettere,' 'Affetti d' Amore,' etc.

are not unfrequently distinguished by the crudest obscenity.[1] The literary form of many of these masterpieces exhibits the beauty of rhythm, the refinement of outline, which we associate with melodies of the best Italian period—with chants of Pergolese, songs of Salvator Rosa. When we compare their subject-matter with that of our Northern Ballads, we notice a marked deficiency of legend, superstition or grotesque fancy. There are no witches, dragons, demon-lovers, no enchanted forests, no mythical heroes, no noble personages, few ghosts, few dreams and visions, in these songs poured forth among the olive-trees and myrtle-groves of Italy. Human nature, conscious of pleasure and of pain, finding its primitive emotion an adequate motive for verse subtly modulated through a thousand keys, is here sufficient to itself. The echoes imported from an outer world of passion and romance and action into this charmed region of the lover's heart are rare and feeble. Through all their national vicissitudes, the Italian peasants followed one sole aim in verse. The *Rispetti* of all times, localities and dialects form one protracted, ever-varying Duo between Thou and I, the *dama* and the *damo*, the eternal protagonists in the play of youth and love.

This absence of legendary and historical material marks a main difference between Italian and Teutonic inspiration. Among the Italic communities the practical historic sense was early developed, and sustained by the tradition of a classic past. It demanded a positive rather than imaginative treatment of contemporary

[1] Upon this point consult Rubieri, *op. cit.* chap. xiv. In Sicily the *Ciure*, says Pitrè, is reckoned unfit for an honest woman's mouth.

fact and mythus. Among the people this requirement was satisfied by *Storie*, *Lamenti*, and prose Chronicles. Very few, indeed, are the relics of either romantic or actual history surviving in the lyrics of the rural population. Only here and there, in dim allusions to the Sicilian Vespers and the Norman Conquest, in the tale of the Baronessa di Carini, or in the Northern legend of Rosmunda, under its popular form of *La Donna Lombarda*, do we find a faint analogy between the Italian and Teutonic ballads.[1] Dramatic, mythical and epical elements are almost wholly wanting in the genuine lyrics of the people.

This statement requires some qualification. The four volumes of *Fiabe, Novelle e Racconti* recently published by Signor Pitrè, prove that the Sicilians in prose at least have a copious literature corresponding to German *Märchen* and Norse tales.[2] This literature, however, has not received poetic treatment in any existing southern songs that have been published, excepting in the few already noticed. At the same time, it must be mentioned that the collections of lyrics in north-western dialects—especially the *Canti Monferrini*, *Canzoni Comasche*, and *Canti Leccesi*—exhibit specimens of genuine ballads. It would seem that contact with French and German borderers along the Alpine rampart had introduced into Piedmont and Lombardy a form of lyric which is not essentially Italian. Had I space sufficient at disposal, I should

[1] The South seems richer in this material than the Centre. See Pitrè's *Canti Pop. Sic.* vol. ii., among the *Leggende e Storie*, especially *La Comare*, *Minni-spartuti*, *Principessa di Carini*, *L'Innamorata del Diavolo*, and some of the bandit songs.

[2] Palermo, Lauriel, 1875.

like to quote the *Donna Lombarda, Moglie Infedele, Giuseppina Parricida, Principessa Giovanna, Giuliano della Croce Bianca, Cecilia, Rè Carlino, Morando*, and several others from Ferraro's collection.[1] They illustrate, what is exceedingly rare in popular Italian poetry, both the subject-matter and the manner peculiar to the Northern Ballad. Let the following verses from *La Sposa per Forza* suffice[2]:

Ra soi madona a r' ha brassaja
Suvra u so coffu a r' ha minèe;
Uardèe qui, ra me noiretta,
Le bele gioje che vi vôi dunèe.
Mi n' ho csa fè dle vostre gioje;
E manc ancur dla vostra cà;
Cma ca voja dir bel gioje
Ra me mama m' na mandirà.

To comparative mythologists in general, and to English students in particular, the most interesting of these rare Italian Ballads is undoubtedly one known as *L' Avvelenato*.[3] So far as I am aware, it is unique in the Italian language; nor had its correspondences with Northern Ballad-literature been noticed until I pointed them out in 1879.[4] In his work on popular Italian poetry, Professor D' Ancona included the following song, which he had heard upon the lips of a young peasant of the Pisan district[5]:

[1] *Canti Monferrini* (Torino-Firenze, Loescher, 1870), pp. 1, 6, 14, 26, 28, 34, 42. One of the ballads cited above, *La Sisilia*, is found in Sicily.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 48.

[3] It does not occur in the *Canti Monferrini*.

[4] See my letter to the *Rassegna Settimanale*, March 9, 1879, on the subject of this ballad. Though I begged Italian students for information respecting similar compositions my letter only elicited a Tuscan version of the *Donna Lombarda*.

[5] *Op. cit.* p. 106.

Dov' eri 'ersera a cena
Caro mio figlio, savio e gentil ?
Mi fai morire
Ohimè !
Dov' eri 'ersera a cena
Gentile mio cavalier ?—
Ero dalla mia dama ;
Mio core stà male,
Che male mi stà !
Ero dalla mia dama ;
'L mio core che se ne và.—
Che ti dièmno da cena,
Caro mio figlio, savio e gentil ?
Mi fai morire,
Ohimè !
Che ti dièmno da cena,
Gentile mio cavalier ?—
Un anguilletta arrosto,
Cara mia madre ;
Mio core stà male,
Che male mi stà !
Un anguilletta arrosto,
'L mio core che se ne và.

Other versions of the same poem occur in the dialects of Venice, Como and Lecco with such variations as prove them all to be the offshoots from some original now lost in great antiquity. That it existed and was famous so far back as the middle of the seventeenth century, is proved by an allusion in the *Cicalata in lode della Padella e della Frittura*, recited before the Accademia della Crusca by Lorenzo Panciatichi in 1656.[1] A few lines are also quoted in the *incatenatura* of the Cieco Fiorentino, published at Verona in 1629.[2] Anyone who is familiar with our Border Minstrelsy will perceive at once that this is only an Italian version of the Ballad of Lord Donald or Lord Randal.[3]

[1] D'Ancona, *op. cit.* p. 106. [2] *Ibid.* pp. 99, 105.
[3] See Child's *English and Scottish Ballads*, vol ii. pp. 244, *et seqq.*

The identity between the two is rendered still more striking by an analysis of the several Lombard versions. In that of Como, for example, the young man makes his will; and this is the last verse [1]:

Cossa lassè alla vostra dama,
Figliuol mio caro, fiorito e gentil,
Cossa lassè alla vostra dama?
La fôrca da impiccarla,
Signora mama, mio cor sta mal!
La fôrca da impiccarla:
Ohimè, ch' io moro, ohimè!

The same version furnishes the episode of the poisoned hounds [2]:

Coss' avì fâ dell' altra mezza,
Figliuol mio caro, fiorito e gentil?
Cossa avì fâ dell' altra mezza?
L' hô dada alla cagnòla:
Signôra mama, mio core sta mal!
L' hô dada alla cagnòla:
Ohimè, ch' io moro, ohimè!
Cossa avì fâ della cagnòla,
Figliuol mio caro, fiorito e gentil?
Cossa avì fâ della cagnòla?
L' è morta drê la strada;

[1] Bolza, *Canz. Pop. Comasche,* No. 49. Here is the Scotch version from Lord Donald:

What will ye leave to your true-love, Lord Donald, my son?
What will ye leave to your true-love, my jollie young man?
The tow and the halter, for to hang on yon tree,
And lat her hang there for the poisoning o' me.

[2] This is the Scotch version, with the variant of Lord Randal:

What gat ye to your dinner, Lord Randal, my son?
What gat ye to your dinner, my handsome young man?
I gat eels boiled in broo; mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wald lie down.

What became of your bloodhounds, Lord Randal, my son?
What became of your bloodhounds, my handsome young man
O, they swelled and they died; mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wald lie down.

Signora mama, mio core sta mal!
L' è morta drê la strada:
Ohimè, ch' io moro, ohimè!

It is worth mentioning that the same Ballad belongs under slightly different forms to the Germans, Swedes, and other nations of the Teutonic stock; but so far as I have yet been able to discover, it remains the sole instance of that species of popular literature in Italy.[1] The phenomenon is singular, and though conjectures may be hazarded in explanation, it is impossible, until further researches for parallel examples have been made, to advance a theory of how this Ballad penetrated so far south as Tuscany.

[1] In Passano's *I Novellieri Italiani in Verso* I find, at p. 20, the notice of a poem, in octave stanzas, which corresponds exactly to the *Heir of Lynn.* Published at Venice, 1530, 1531, 1542, it bears this title: 'Essempio dun giovane ricchissimo; qual consumata la ricchezza: disperato a un trave si sospese. Nel qual il padre previsto il suo fatal corso gia molti anni avanti infinito tesoro posto havea, et quello per il carico fracassato, la occulta moneta scoperse.' The young man's name is Fenitio. I have not seen this poem, and since it is composed in *ottava rima* it cannot be classed exactly with the *Avvelenato.* Passano also catalogues the *Historia di tre Giovani disperati e di tre fate,* and the *Historia di Leon Bruno,* which seem to contain ballad elements.

CHAPTER V.

POPULAR RELIGIOUS POETRY.

The Thirteenth Century—Outburst of Flagellant Fanaticism—The *Battuti, Bianchi, Disciplinati*—Acquire the name of *Laudesi*—Jacopone da Todi—His Life—His Hymns—The *Corrotto*—Franciscan Poetry—Tresatti's Collection—Grades of Spiritual Ecstasy—Lauds of the Confraternities—Benivieni—Feo Belcari and the Florentine Hymn-writers—Relation to Secular Dance-songs—Origins of the Theatre—Italy had hardly any true Miracle Plays—Umbrian *Divozioni*—The Laud becomes Dramatic—Passion Plays—Medieval Properties—The Stage in Church or in the Oratory—The *Sacra Rappresentazione*—A Florentine Species—Fraternities for Boys—Names of the *Festa*—Theory of its Origin—Shows in Medieval Italy—Pageants of S. John's Day at Florence—Their Machinery—Florentine *Ingegnieri*—Forty-three Plays in D' Ancona's Collection—Their Authors—The Prodigal Son—Elements of Farce—Interludes and Music—Three Classes of *Sacre Rappresentazioni*—Biblical Subjects—Legends of Saints—Popular *Novelle*—Conversion of the Magdalen—Analysis of Plays.

THE history of popular religious poetry takes us back to the first age of Italian literature and to the discords of the thirteenth century. All Italy had been torn asunder by the internecine struggle of Frederick II. with Innocent III. and Gregory IX. The people saw the two chiefs of Christendom at open warfare, exchanging anathemas, and doing each what in him lay to render peace and amity impossible. Milan resounded to the shrieks of *paterini*, burned upon the public square by order of an intolerant pontiff. Padua echoed with the groans of Ezzelino's victims, doomed to death by hundreds and by thousands in his dun-

geons, or cast forth maimed and mutilated to perish in the fields. The southern provinces swarmed with Saracens, whom an infidel Emperor had summoned to his aid against a fanatical Pope. It seemed as though the age, which had witnessed the assertion of Italian independence and the growth of the free cities, was about to end in a chaos of bloodshed, fire and frantic cruelty. The climax of misery and fury was reached in the Crusade launched by Alexander IV. against the tyrants of the Trevisan Marches. When Ezzelino died like a dog in 1259, the maddened populace believed that his demon had now been loosed from chains of flesh, and sent forth to the elements to work its will in freedom. The prince of darkness was abroad and menacing. Though the monster had perished, the myth of evil that survived him had power to fascinate, and was intolerable.

The conscience of the people, crazed by the sight of such iniquity and suffering, bereft of spiritual guidance, abandoned to bad government, made itself suddenly felt in an indescribable movement of religious terror. 'In the year 1260,' wrote the Chronicler of Padua,[1] 'when Italy was defiled by many horrible crimes, a sudden and new perturbation seized at first upon the folk of Perugia, next upon the Romans, and lastly on the population of all Italy, who, stung by the fear of God, went forth processionally, gentle and base-born, old and young, together, through the city streets and squares, naked save for a waist-band round their loins, holding a whip of leather in their hands, with tears and groans, scourging their shoulders till the blood

[1] Muratori, *Rer. Ital. Script.* viii. 712.

flowed down. Not by day alone, but through the night in the intense cold of winter, with lighted torches they roamed by hundreds, by thousands, by tens of thousands through the churches, and flung themselves down before the altars, led by priests with crosses and banners. The same happened in all villages and hamlets, so that the fields and mountains resounded with the cries of sinners calling upon God. All instruments of music and songs of love were hushed; only the dismal wail of penitents was heard in town and country.'

It will be noticed that this fanaticism of the Flagellants began among the Umbrian highlands, the home of S. Francis and the centre of pietistic art, where the passions of the people have ever been more quickly stirred by pathos than elsewhere in Italy. The *Battuti*, as they were called, formed no mere sect. Populations of whole cities, goaded by an irresistible impulse, which had something of the Dionysiac madness in it, went forth as though a migration of the race had been initiated. Blind instinct, the intoxication of religious frenzy, urged them restlessly and aimlessly from place to place. They had no Holy Land, no martyr's shrine, in view. Only the ineffable horror of a coming judgment, only the stings of spiritual apprehension, the fierce craving after sympathy in common acts of delirium, the allurements of an exaltation shared by thousands, drove them on, lugubrious herds, like Mænads of the wrath of God. This insurgence of all classes, swelling upward from the lowest, gaining the middle regions, and confounding the highest in the flood of one promiscuous

multitude, threatened the very fabric of society.[1] Repentance and compunction, exhibited upon a scale of such colossal magnitude, attended by incidents of such impassioned frenzy, assumed the aspect of vice and of insanity. Florence shut her gates to the half-naked *Battuti*. At Milan the tyrants of the Della Torre blood raised 6co gibbets as a warning. Manfred drew a military cordon round his southern States to save them from contagion. The revival was diagnosed by cold observers as an epidemic, or as a craving akin to that which sets in motion droves of bisons on a trackless plain. It needed drastic measures of Draconian justice to curb a disease which threatened the whole nation. Gradually, the first fury of this fanatical enthusiasm subsided. It was but the symptom of moral and intellectual bewilderment, of what the French would call *ahurissement*, in a race of naturally firm and patient fibre. Yet, when it passed, durable traces of the agitation remained. Lay fraternities were formed, not only in Umbria and Tuscany, but in almost all provinces of the peninsula, who called themselves *Disciplinati di Gesù Cristo*. These societies aimed at continuing the ascetic practices of the Flagellants, and at prolonging their passion of penitence in a more sober spirit. Scourging formed an essential part of their observances, but it was used with decency and moderation. Their constitution was strictly democratic, within limits sanctioned by the clergy. They existed for the people, supplementing

[1] A curious letter describing the entrance of the *Battuti* into Rome in 1399 may be read in Romagnoli's publication *Le Compagnie de' Battuti in Roma*, Bologna, 1862. It refers to a period later by a century than the first outbreak of the enthusiasm.

and not superseding the offices of the Church. From the date of their foundation they seem to have paid much attention to the recitation of hymns in the vernacular. These hymns were called *Laude*. Written for and by the people, they were distinguished from the Latin hymns of the Church by greater spontaneity and rudeness. No limit of taste or literary art was set to the expression of a fervent piety. The Lauds dwelt chiefly on the Passion of our Lord, and were used as a stimulus to compunction. In course of time this part of their system became so prominent that the *Battuti* or *Disciplinati* acquired the milder title of *Laudesi*.[1]

From the *Laudesi* of the fourteenth century rose one great lyric poet, Jacopone da Todi, whose hymns embrace the whole gamut of religious passion, from

[1] Some banners—*Gonfaloni* or *Stendardi*—of the Perugian fraternities, preserved in the Pinacoteca of that town, are interesting for their illustration of these religious companies at a later date. The Gonfalone of S. Bernardino by Bonfigli represents the saint between heaven and earth pleading for his votaries. Their Oratory (Cappella di Giustizia) is seen behind, and in front are the men and women of the order. That of the *Societas Annuntiatæ* with date 1466, shows a like band of lay brethren and sisters. That of the Giustizia by Perugino has a similar group, kneeling and looking up to Madonna, who is adored by S. Francis and S. Bernardino in the heavens. Behind is a landscape with a portion of Perugia near the Church of S. Francis. The Stendardo of the Confraternità di S. Agostino by Pinturicchio exhibits three white-clothed members of the body, kneeling and gazing up to their patron. There is also a fine picture in the Perugian Pinacoteca by Giov. Boccati of Camerino (signed and dated 1447) representing Madonna enthroned in a kind of garden, surrounded by child-like angels with beautiful blonde hair, singing and reading from choir books in a double row of semicircular choir-stalls. Below, S. Francis and S. Dominic are leading each two white *Disciplinati* to the throne. These penitents carry their scourges, and holes cut in the backs of their monastic cloaks show the skin red with stripes. One on either side has his face uncovered: the other wears the hood down, with eye-holes pierced in it. This picture belonged to the Confraternity of S. Domenico.

tender emotions of love to sombre anticipations of death and thrilling visions of judgment. Reading him, we listen to the true lyrical cry of the people's heart in its intolerance of self-restraint, blending the language of erotic ecstasy with sobs and sighs of soul-consuming devotion, aspiring to heaven on wings sped by the energy of human desire. The flight of his inebriated piety transcends and out-soars the strongest pinion of ecclesiastical hymnology. Such lines as—

Fac me plagis vulnerari,
Cruce hâc inebriari
Ob amorem filii—

do but supply the theme for Jacopone's descant. Violently discordant notes clash and mingle in his chords, and are resolved in bursts of ardour bordering on delirium. He leaps from the grotesque of plebeian imagery to pictures of sublime pathos, from incoherent gaspings to sentences pregnant with shrewd knowledge of the heart, by sudden and spontaneous transitions, which reveal the religious sentiment in its simplest form, unspoiled by dogma, unstiffened by scholasticism. None, for example, but a true child of the people could have found the following expression of a desire to suffer with Christ[1]:

O Signor per cortesia
Mandame la malsania
A me la freve quartana
la contina e la terzana,
la doppia cottidiana
Colla grande ydropesia.

[1] *Cantici di Jacopone da Todi* (Roma, Salviano, 1558), p. 64. I quote from this edition as the most authentic, and reproduce its orthography

A me venga mal de dente
Mal de capo e mal de ventre,
a lo stomaco dolor pungente
en canna l' asquinantia.
Mal de occhi e doglia de fianco
e la postema al lato manco
tyseco me ionga enalco
e omne tempo la frenesia.
Agia el fegato rescaldato
la milza grossa el ventre enfiato,
lo polmone sia piagato
Con gran tossa e parlasia.

In order to understand Jacopone da Todi and to form any true conception of the medium from which his poems sprang, it is necessary to study the legend of his life, which, though a legend, bears upon its face the stamp of truth. It is an offshoot from the Saga of S. Francis, a vivid utterance of the times which gave it birth.[1] Jacopone was born at Todi, one of those isolated ancient cities which rear themselves upon their hill-tops between the valleys of the Nera and the Tiber, on the old post-road from Narni to Perugia. He belonged to the family of the Benedetti, who were reckoned among the noblest of the district. In his youth he followed secular studies, took the degree of Doctor of Laws, and practised with a keen eye for gain and with not less, his biographer hints, than the customary legal indifference for justice. He married a beautiful young wife, whom he dressed splendidly and sent among his equals to all places of medieval amusement. She was, however, inwardly religious. The spirit of S. Francis had passed over her; and un-

[1] This Life is prefixed to Salviano's Roman edition of Jacopone's hymns, 1558.

known to all the crowd around her, unknown to her husband, she practised the extremities of ascetic piety. One day she went, at her husband's bidding, to a merry-making of the nobles of Todi; and it so happened that 'while she was dancing and taking pleasure with the rest, an accident occurred, fit to move the greatest pity. For the platform whereupon the party were assembled, fell in and was broken to pieces, causing grievous injury to those who stood upon it. She was so hurt in the fall that she lost the power of speech, and in a few hours after died. Jacopo, who by God's mercy was not there, no sooner heard the sad news of his wife than he ran to the place. He found her on the point of death, and sought, as is usual in those cases, to unlace her; but she, though she could not speak, offered resistance to her husband's unlacing her. However, he used force and overcame her, and unlaced and carried her to his house. There, when she had died, he unclothed her with his own hands, and found that underneath those costly robes and next to her naked flesh she wore a hair-shirt of the roughest texture. Jacopone, who up to now had believed his wife, since she was young and beautiful, to be like other women, worldly and luxurious, stood as it were astonied and struck dumb when he beheld a thing so contrary to his opinion. Wherefore from that time forward he went among men like to one who is stunned, and appeared no longer to be a reasonable man as theretofore. The cause of this his change to outward view was not a sudden infirmity of health, or extraordinary sorrow for the cruel death of his wife, or any such-like occur-

rence, but an overwhelming compunction of the heart begotten in him by this ensample, and a new recognition of what he was and of his own wretchedness. Wherefore turning back to his own heart, and reckoning with bitterness the many years that had been spent so badly, and seeing the peril in which he had continued up to that time, he set himself to change the manner of his life, and even as he had lived heretofore wholly for the world, so now he resolved to live wholly for Christ.'

Jacopone's biographer goes on to tell us how, after this shock, he became an altered man. He sold all his goods and gave away his substance to the poor, retaining nothing for himself, but seeking by every device within his power to render himself vile and ridiculous in the eyes of men. At one time he stripped himself naked, and put upon his back the trappings of an ass, and so appeared among the gentles of his earlier acquaintance. On another occasion he entered a company of merry-making folk in his brother's house, without clothes, smeared with turpentine and rolled in feathers like a bird.[1] By these mad pranks he acquired the reputation of one half-witted, and the people called him Jacopone instead of Messer Jacopo de' Benedetti. Yet there was a keen spirit living in the man, who had determined literally to become a fool for Christ's sake. A citizen once bought a fowl and bade Jacopone carry it to his house. Jacopone took the bird and placed it in the man's family vault, where it was found. To all remonstrances he answered with a

[1] The biographer adds, 'Ma fu si horribile e spiacevole a vedere che conturbò tutta quella festa, lasciando ogniuno pieno di amaritudine.'

solemnity which inspired terror, that *there* was the citizen's real home. At the end of ten years spent in self-abasement of this sort, Jacopone entered the lowest rank of the Franciscan brotherhood. The composition of a Laud so full of spiritual fire that its inspiration seemed indubitable, won for the apparent madman this grace. There was something noble in his bearing, even though his actions and his utterance proved his brain distempered. No fear of hell nor hope of heaven, says his biographer, but God's infinite goodness and beauty impelled him to embrace the monastic life and to subject himself to the severest discipline. Meditating on the Divine perfection, he came to regard himself as 'entirely hideous, vile and stinking, beyond the most abominable carrion.' It was part of his religious exaltation to prove this to himself by ghastly penances, instead of seeking to render his body a fit temple for God's spirit by healthy and clean living. He had a carnal partiality for liver; and in order to mortify this vile affection, he procured the liver of a beast and hung it in his cell. It became putrid, swarmed with vermin, and infected the convent with its stench. The friars discovered Jacopone rejoicing in the sight and odour of this corruption. With sound good sense they then condemned him to imprisonment in the common privies; but he rejoiced in this punishment, and composed one of his most impassioned odes in that foul place. Still, though he was clearly mad, he had the soul of a Christian and a poet. His ecstasies were not always repugnant to our sense of delicacy. Contemplating the wounds of Christ, it entered into his heart to

desire all suffering which it could be possible for man to undergo—the pangs of all the souls condemned to purgatory, the torments of all the damned in hell, the infinite anguish of all the devils—if only by this bearing of the pains of others he might be made like Christ, and go at length, the last of all, the world, to Paradise. Not only the passion but the love of Jesus inflamed him with indescribable raptures. He spent whole days in singing, weeping, groaning, and ejaculation. 'He ran,' says the biographer, 'in a fury of love, and under the impression that he was embracing and clasping Jesus Christ, would fling his arms about a tree.' It is not possible to imagine more potent workings of religious insanity in a distempered and at the same time nobly-gifted character. That obscene antipathy to nature which characterised medieval asceticism, becomes poetic in a lunatic of genius like Jacopone. Nor was his natural acumen blunted. He discerned how far the Papacy diverged from Christianity in practice, and assailed Boniface VIII. with bitterest invectives. Among other prophetic sayings ascribed to him, we find this, which corresponds most nearly to the truth of history: 'Pope Boniface, like a fox thou didst enter on the Papacy, like a wolf thou reignest, and like a dog shalt thou depart from it.' For his free speech Boniface had him sent to prison; and in his dungeon, rejoicing, Jacopone composed the finest of his Canticles.

Such was the man who struck the key-note of religious popular poetry in Italy, and whose Lauds may be regarded as the germ of a voluminous literature. Passing from his life to his writings, it will suffice to

give a few specimens of those hymns which are most characteristic of his temper. We have already seen how he brought together the most repulsive details of disease, in order to express his desire to suffer with Christ.[1] Here is the beginning of a canticle in praise of the madness he embraced with a similar object[2]:

Senno me pare e cortesia
empazir per lo bel messia.
Ello me fa sì gran sapere
a chi per dio vol empazire
en parige non se vidde
ancor si gran phylosofia.

These words found an echo after many years in Benivieni's even more hysterical hymn upon divine madness, which was substituted in Savonarola's Carnivals for the *Trionfi* of Lorenzo de' Medici.

A trace of the Franciscan worship of poverty gives some interest to a hymn on the advantages of pauperism. The theme, however, is supported with solid arguments after the fashion of Juvenal's *vacuus viator*[3]:

Povertate muore en pace,
nullo testamento face,
lassa el mondo como jace
e la gente concordate.
Non a judice ne notaro
a corte non porta salaro,
ridese del omo avaro
che sta en tanta anxietate.

Truer to the inebriation of Jacopone's piety are the following stanzas, incoherent from excess of passion, which seem to be the ebullition of one of his most frenzied moments[4]:

[1] See above, p. 284. The seventeenth-century editor of Jacopone and his followers, Tresatti, has justly styled this repulsive but characteristic utterance, 'invettiva terribile contro di se.'

[2] *Op. cit.* p. 109. [3] *Ibid.* p. 77. [4] *Ibid.* p. 122. See Appendix.

Amore amore che si mai ferito
altro che amore non posso gridare,
amore amore teco so unito
altro non posso che te abbracciare,
amore amore forte mai rapito
lo cor sempre si spande per amore
per te voglio pasmare : Amor ch' io teco sia
amor per cortesia : Fammi morir d' amore.

Amor amor Jesu so gionto aporto
amor amor Jesu tu m' ai menato,
amor amor Jesu damme conforto
amor amor Jesu si m' ai enflammato,
amor amor Jesu pensa lo porto
fammete star amor sempre abracciato,
con teco trasformato : En vera caritate
en somma veritate : De trasformato amore.

Amor amore grida tuttol mondo
amor amore omne cosa clama,
amore amore tanto se profondo
chi piu t' abraccia sempre piu t' abrama,
amor amor tu se' cerchio rotondo
con tuttol cor chi c' entra sempre t' ama,
che tu se' stame e trama : chi t' ama per vestire
cusi dolce sentire : Che sempre grida amore.

Amor amor Jesu desideroso
amor voglio morire a te abracciando,
amor amor Jesu dolce mio sposo
amor amor la morte l'ademando,
amor amor Jesu si delectoso
tu me t' arendi en te transformando,
pensa ch' io vo pasmando : Amor non so o me sia
Jesu speranza mia : Abyssame en amore.

A still more mysterious depth is sounded in another hymn in praise of self-annihilation—the Nirvana of asceticism [1] :

Non posso esser renato
s' io en me non so morto,
anichilato en tucto

[1] *Ibid.* p. 45.

el esser conservare,
del nihil glorioso
nelom ne gusta fructo,
se Dio non fal conducto
che om non cia que fare,
o glorioso stare
en nihil quietato,
lontellecto posato
e laffecto dormire.

Ciocho veduto.e pensato
tutto e feccia e bruttura
pensando de laltura
del virtuoso stato,
nel pelago chio veggio
non ce so notatura
faro somergitura
del om che anegato
sommece inarenato
nonor de smesuranza
vincto de labundanza
del dolce mio sire.

One of Jacopone's authentic poems so far detaches itself in character and composition from the rest, and is so important, as will shortly be seen, for the history of Italian dramatic art, that it demands separate consideration.[1] It assumes the form of dialogue between Mary and Christ upon the Cross, followed by the lamentation of the Virgin over her dead Son. A messenger informs the Mother that Christ has been taken prisoner:

Donna del Paradiso,
Lo tuo figliolo è priso,
Jesu Cristo beato.
Accurre, donna, e vide
Che la gente l' allide ;

[1] It is printed in Salviano's, and reproduced in Tresatti's edition. I have followed the reading offered by D' Ancona, *Origini del Teatro*, vol. i. p. 142. See Translation in Appendix.

Credo che llo s' occide,
Tanto l' on flagellato.

Attended by the Magdalen, whom she summons to her aid, Mary hurries to the judgment-seat of Pilate, and begs for mercy:

O Pilato, non fare
'L figlio mio tormentare,
Ch' io te posso mostrare
Como a torto è accusato.

But here the voices of the Chorus, representing the Jewish multitude, are heard:

Crucifige, crucifige!
Omo che se fa rege,
Secondo nostra lege,
Contradice al Senato.

Christ is removed to the place of suffering, and Mary cries:

O figlio, figlio, figlio,
Figlio, amoroso figlio,
Figlio, chi dà consiglio
Al cor mio angustiato!
Figlio, occhi giocondi,
Figlio, co' non rispondi?
Figlio, perchè t' ascondi
Dal petto o' se' lattato?

They show her the cross:

Madonna, ecco la cruce
Che la gente l' adduce,
Ove la vera luce
De' essere levato.

They tell her how Jesus is being nailed to it, sparing none of the agonising details. Then she exclaims:

E io comencio el corrotto ;
Figliolo, mio deporto,
Figlio, chi mi t' à morto ,
Figlio mio delicato !
Meglio averien fatto
Che 'l cor m' avesser tratto,
Che nella croce tratto
Starci desciliato.

Jesus now breaks silence, and comforts her, pointing out that she must live for His disciples, and naming John. He dies, and she continues the *Corrotto*[1] :

Figlio, l' alma t' è uscita,
Figlio de la smarrita,
Figlio de la sparita,
Figlio [mio] attossicato !
Figlio bianco e vermiglio,
Figlio senza simiglio,
Figlio, a chi m' apiglio,
Figlio, pur m' hai lassato !
Figlio bianco e biondo,
Figlio, volto jocondo,
Figlio, perchè t' à el mondo,
Figlio, cusì sprezato !
Figlio dolce e piacente,
Figlio de la dolente,
Figlio, à te la gente
Malamente trattato !
Joanne, figlio novello,
Morto è lo tuo fratello ;
Sentito aggio 'l coltello
Che fo profetizzato,
Che morto à figlio e mate,
De dura morte afferrate ;
Trovârsi abbracciate
Mate e figlio a un cruciato.

Upon this note of anguish the poem closes. It is conducted throughout in dialogue, and is penetrated with

[1] The word *Corrotto*, used by Mary, means lamentation for the dead. It corresponds to the Greek *Threnos*, Corsican *Vocero*, Gaelic *Coronach*.

dramatic energy. For Passion Music of a noble and yet flowing type, such as Pergolese might have composed, it is still admirably adapted.

Each strophe of Fra Jacopone's Canticles might be likened to a seed cast into the then fertile soil of the Franciscan Order, which bore fruit a thousand-fold in its own kind of spiritual poetry. The vast collection of hymns, published by Tresatti in the seventeenth century, bears the name of Jacopone, and incorporates his genuine compositions.[1] But we must regard the main body of the work as rather belonging to Jacopone's school than to the master. Taken collectively, these poems bear upon their face the stamp of considerable age, and there is no reason to suppose that their editor doubted of their authenticity. A critical reader of the present time, however, discerns innumerable evidences of collaboration, and detects expansion and dilution of more pregnant themes in the copious outpourings of this cloistral inspiration. What the Giotteschi are to Giotto, Tresatti's collection is to Salviano's imprint of Jacopone. It forms a

[1] *Le Poesie spirituali del Beato Jacopone da Todi.* In Venetia, appresso Niccolò Miserrimi, MDCXVII. The book is a thick 4to, consisting of 1,055 pages, closely printed. It contains a voluminous running commentary. The editor, Tresatti, a Minorite Friar, says he had extracted 211 *Cantici* of Jacopone from MSS. belonging to his Order, whereas the Roman and Florentine editions, taken together, contained 102 in all. He divides them into seven sections: (1) Satires, (2) Moral Songs, (3) Odes, (4) Penitential Hymns, (5), The Theory of Divine Love, (6) Spiritual Love Poems, (7) Spiritual Secrets. This division corresponds to seven stages in the soul's progress toward perfection. The arrangement is excellent, though the sections in some places interpenetrate. For variety of subjects, the collection is a kind of lyrical encyclopædia, touching all needs and states of the devout soul. It might supply material for meditation through a lifetime to a heart in harmony with its ascetic and erotically enthusiastic tone.

complete manual of devotion, framed according to the spirit of S. Francis. In its pages we read the progress of the soul from a state of worldliness and vice, through moral virtue, into the outer court of religious conviction. Thence we pass to penitence and the profound terror of sin. Having traversed the region of purgatory upon earth, we are introduced to the theory of Divine Love, which is reasoned out and developed upon themes borrowed from each previous step gained by the spirit in its heavenward journey. Here ends the soul's novitiate; and we enter on a realm of ecstacy. The poet bathes in an illimitable ocean of intoxicating love, summons the images of sense and makes them adumbrate his rapture of devotion, reproducing in a myriad modes the Oriental metaphors of the soul's marriage to Christ suggested by the Canticle of Canticles. A final grade in this ascent to spiritual perfection is attained in the closing odes, which celebrate annihilation—the fusion of the mortal in immortal personality, the bliss of beatific vision, Nirvana realised on earth in ecstacy by man. At this final point sense swoons, the tongue stammers, language refuses to perform her office, the reason finds no place, the universe is whirled in spires of flame, we float in waves of metaphor, we drown in floods of contemplation, the whole is closed with an *O Altitudo!*

It is not possible to render scantiest justice to this extraordinary monument of the Franciscan fervour by any extracts or descriptions. Its full force can only be felt by prolonged and, if possible, continuous perusal. S. Catherine and S. Teresa attend us while we read; and when the book is finished, we feel, perhaps for the

first time, the might, the majesty, the overmastering attraction of that sea of faith which swept all Europe in the thirteenth century. We understand how *naufragar in questo mar fù dolce.*

Though the task is ungrateful, it behoves the historian of popular Italian poetry to extract some specimens from this immense repertory of anonymous lyrics. Omitting the satires, which are composed upon the familiar monastic rubrics of vanity, human misery, the loathsomeness of the flesh, and contempt of the world, I will select one stanza upon Chastity from among the moral songs [1]:

O Castità bel fiore,
Che ti sostiene amore.
O fior di Castitate,
Odorifero giglio,
Con gran soavitate,
Sei di color vermiglio,
Et a la Trinitate
Tu ripresenti odore.

Chastity in another place is thus described [2]:—

La Castitate pura,
Più bella che viola,
Cotanto ha chiaro viso
Che par un paradiso.

Poverty, the Cardinal Virtues, and the Theological Virtues receive their full meed of praise in a succession of hymns. Then comes a long string of proverbs, which contain much sober wisdom, with passages of poetic feeling like the following [3]:

Li pesciarelli piccoli
Scampan la rete in mare;

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 149. [2] *Ibid.* p. 244. [3] *Ibid.* p. 253.

Grand' ucel prende l' aquila,
Non può 'l moscon pigliare ;
Enchinasi la vergola,
L' acqua lassa passare ;
Ma fa giù cader l' arbore,
Che non si può inchinare.

Among the odes we may first choose this portion of a carol written to be sung before the manger, or *presepe*, which it was usual to set up in churches at Christmas [1] :

Veggiamo il suo Bambino
Gammettare nel fieno,
E le braccia scoperte
Porgere ad ella in seno,
Ed essa lo ricopre
El meglio che può almeno,
Mettendoli la poppa
Entro la sua bocchina.
Cioppava lo Bambino
Con le sue labbruccia ;
Sol la dolciata cioppa
Volea, non minestruccia ;
Stringeala con la bocca
Che non avea dentuccia,
Il figliuolino bello,
Ne la dolce bocchina.
A la sua man manca,
Cullava lo Bambino,
E con sante carole
Nenciava il suo amor fino . . .
Gli Angioletti d' intorno
Se ne gian danzando,
Facendo dolci versi
E d' amor favellando.

There is a fresco by Giotto behind the altar in the Arena Chapel at Padua, which illustrates part of this hymn. A picture attributed to Botticelli in our

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 266. See Translation in Appendix.

National Gallery illustrates the rest. The spirit of the carol has been reproduced with less sincerity in a Jesuit's Latin hymn, *Dormi, fili, dormi, mater.*

Close upon the joys of Mary follow her sorrows. The following is a popular echo of the *Stabat Mater* [1]:

Or si incomincia lo duro pianto
Che fa la Madre di Christo tanto ;
Or intendete l' amaro canto,
Fu crocifisso quel capo santo.
Ma quando che s' inchiodava,
Presso al figliuolo la Madre stava ;
Quando a la croce gli occhi levava,
Per troppa doglia ci trangosciava.
La Madre viddelo incoronato,
Et ne la croce tutto piagato,
Per le pene e pel sangue versato
Sitibondo gridar Consummato.

Many of the odes are devoted to S. Francis. One passage recording the miracle of the Stigmata deserves to be extracted [2]:

La settima a Laverna,
Stando in orazione,
Ne la parte superna,
Con gran divozione,
Mirabil visione
Seraphin apparuto
Crucifisso è veduto,
Con sei ale mostrato :
Incorporotti stimmate
A lato piedi e mano ;
Duro già fora a crederè
Se nol contiam di piano,
Staendo vivo et sano
Molti l' han mirate,
L' ha morte dichiarate,
Da molti fu palpato.

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 306.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 343.

La sua carne bianchissima
Pareva puerile ;
Avanti era brunissima
Per gli freddi nevili ;
La fe amor si gentile,
Parea glorificata,
Da ogni gente ammirata
Del mirabil ornato.

The Penitential Hymns resound with trumpets of Judgment and groans of lost souls. There is one terrible lament of a man who repented *after death* ; another of one arising from the grave, *damned*.[1] The Day of Judgment inspires stanzas heavy with lugubrious chords and a leaden fall[2] :

Tutta la terra tornerà a niente,
Le pietre piangeranno duramente,
Conturbaronsi tutti i monumente,
Per la sententia di Dio onnipotente
Che tutti sentiranno.

. . . . . .

Allora udrai dal ciel trombe sonare,
Et tutti morti vedrai suscitare,
Avanti al tribunal di Christo andare,
E 'l fuoco ardente per l' aria volare
Con gran velocitate.

. . . . . .

Porgine aiuto, alto Signor verace,
E campane da quel foco penace,
E danne penitentia si verace
Che 'n ciel possiam venir a quella pace
Dove in eterno regni.

This is the *Dies Iræ* adapted for the people, and expanded in its motives.

The exposition and the expression of Divine Love occupy a larger space than any other section of the

[1] *Op. cit.* pp. 416, 420.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 433.

series. Mystical psychology, elaborated with scholastic subtlety of argument and fine analysis of all the grades of feeling, culminates in lyric raptures, only less chaotic than the stanzas already quoted from Jacopone. The poet breaks out into short ejaculations[1]:

O alta Nichilitate,
Dhe mi di dove tu stai!

He faints and swoons before the altar in the languors of emotion[2]:

Languisco per amore
Di Gesù mio Amatore.

We see before our eyes the trances of S. Catherine, so well portrayed with sensuous force by Sodoma. Then he resumes the Song of Solomon in stanzas to be counted by the hundred, celebrates the marriage of Christ and the soul, or seeks crude carnal metaphors to convey his meaning[3]:

Del tuo bacio, amore,
Degnami di baciare.
Dhe baciami, dolcezza
Di contrizione,
Et dolce soavezza
Di compunzione,
O santa allegrezza
Di devozione,
Per nulla stagione
Non m' abandonare.
Poì che 'l bacio sento,
Bevo a le mammelle
C' hanno odore d' unguento;
Pur le tue scintille
A bever non so lento
Con le mie maxille,
Più che volte mille
Vò me inebriare.

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 703. [2] *Ibid.* p. 741. [3] *Ibid.* p. 715.

Let this suffice. With the language of sweetness and monastic love we are soon surfeited. Were it not that the *crescendo* of erotic exaltation ends at last in a jubilee of incomprehensible passion, blending the incoherence of delirium with fragments of theosophy which might have been imported from old Alexandrian sources or from dim regions of the East, a student of our century would shrink aghast from some of these hermaphroditic hymns, as though he had been witness of wild acts of nympholepsy in a girl he reckoned sane.

Through the two centuries which followed Jacopone's death (1306 ?) the Lauds of the Confraternities continued to form a special branch of popular poetry; and in the fifteenth century they were written in considerable quantities by men of polite education. Like all hymns, these spiritual songs are less remarkable for literary quality than devoutness. It is difficult to find one rising to the height of Jacopone's inspiration. Many of the later compositions even lack religious feeling, and seem to have been written as taskwork. Those, for example, by Lorenzo de' Medici bear the same relation to his *Canti Carnascialeschi* as Pontano's odes to the Saints bear to his elegies and Baian lyrics. This was inevitable in an age saturated with the adverse ideals of the classical Revival, when Platonic theism threatened to supplant Christianity, and society was clogged with frigid cynicism. Yet even in the sixteenth century, those hymns which came directly from the people's heart, thrilling with the strong vibrations of Savonarola's preaching, are still remarkable for almost frantic piety.

Among the many Florentine hymn-writers who felt that influence, Girolamo Benivieni holds the most distinguished place, both for the purity of his style and for the sincerity of his religious feeling. I will set side by side two versions from his book of Lauds, illustrating the extreme limits of devout emotion—the calmness of a meditative piety and the spasms of passionate enthusiasm. The first is a little hymn to Jesus, profoundly felt and expressed with exquisite simplicity[1]:

Jesus, whoso with Thee
Hangs not in pain and loss
Pierced on the cruel cross,
At peace shall never be.

Lord, unto me be kind:
Give me that peace of mind,
Which in this world so blind
And false dwells but with Thee.

Give me that strife and pain,
Apart from which 'twere vain
Thy love on earth to gain
Or seek a share in Thee.

If, Lord, with Thee alone
Heart's peace and love be known,
My heart shall be Thine own,
Ever to rest with Thee.

Here in my heart be lit
Thy fire, to feed on it,
Till burning bit by bit
It dies to live with Thee.

Jesus, whoso with Thee
Hangs not in pain or loss,
Pierced on the cruel cross,
At peace shall never be.

[1] *Opere di Girolamo Benivieni* (Venegia, G. de Gregori, 1524), p. 151.

The second is an echo of Jacopone's eulogy of madness, prolonged and developed with amorous extravagance[1]:

Never was there so sweet a gladness,
Joy of so pure and strong a fashion,
As with zeal and love and passion
Thus to embrace Christ's holy madness.

They who are mad in Jesus, slight
All that the wise man seeks and prizes;
Wealth and place, pomp, pride, delight,
Pleasure and fame, their soul despises:
Sorrow and tears and sacrifices,
Poverty, pain, and low estate,
All that the wise men loathe and hate,
Are sought by the Christian in his madness.

They who are fools for Christ in heaven,
Should they be praised peradventure, mourn,
Seeing the praise that to them is given
Was taken from God; but hate and scorn
With joy and gladness of soul are borne:
The Christian listens and smiles for glee
When he hears the taunt of his foe, for he
Glories and triumphs in holy madness.

Many collections of Lauds were early committed to the press; and of these we have an excellent modern reprint in the *Laude spirituali di Feo Belcari e di altri*, which includes hymns by Castellano Castellani, Bernardo Giambullari, Francesco Albizzi, Lorenzo de' Medici, Lucrezia Tornabuoni, and the Pulci brothers.[2] Studying this miscellany, we perceive that between the *Laude* and *Ballate* of the people there is

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 143. I have only translated the opening stanzas of this hymn.

[2] Published at Florence by Molini and Cecchi, 1863. Compare the two collections printed by Prof. G. Ferraro from Ferrarese MSS. *Poesie popolari religiose del secolo xiv.* Bologna, Romagnoli, 1877.

often little but a formal difference. Large numbers are parodies of amatory or obscene songs, beginning with nearly the same words and intended to be sung to the same tunes. Thus the famous ballad, *O vaghe montanine e pastorelle* becomes *O vaghe di Gesù, o verginelle.*[1] The direction for singing *Crucifisso a capo chino* is *Cantasi come—Una donna di fino amore*, which was a coarse street-song in vogue among the common folk.[2] *Vergine, alta regina*, is modelled upon *Galantina, morosina*; *I' son quella pecorella* upon *I' son quella villanella*; *Giù per la mala via l'anima mia ne va* on *Giù per la villa lunga la bella se ne va.*[3] Others are imitations of carnival choruses noted for their grossness and lewd inuendoes.[4] It is clear that the *Laudesi*, long before the days of Rowland Hill, discerned the advantage of not letting the devil have all the good tunes. Other parallels between the Florentine Lauds and the revival hymns of the present century might be pointed out. Yet in proportion as the Italian religious sentiment is more sensuous and erotic than that of the Teutonic nations, so are the Lauds more unreservedly emotional than the most audacious utterances of American or English Evangelicalism. As an excellent Italian critic has recently observed, the amorous and religious poems of the people were only distinguished by the difference of their object. Expression, versification, melody, pitch of sentiment, remained unaltered. 'Men sang the same *strambotti* to the Virgin and the lady of their love, to the rose

[1] *Laude, etc.* p. 105.

[2] *Op. cit.* p. 16. See *Canzone a Ballo*, etc. (Firenze, 1568), p. 30, for this song.

[3] *Op. cit.* pp. 96, 227, 50. [4] See *op. cit.* pp. 227, 234, and *passim.*

of Jericho and the red rose of the balcony.'[1] No notion of impropriety seems to have been suggested by this confusion of divergent feelings. Otherwise, Savonarola would hardly have suffered his proselytes to roam the streets chanting stanzas which are little better than echoes from the brothel or travesties of Poliziano's chorus of the Mænads. The Italians have never been pious in the same sense as the Northern nations. Their popular religious poetry is the lyric of emotion, the lyric of the senses losing self-restraint in an outpouring of voluptuous ecstasy. With them 'music is a love-lament or a prayer addressed to God;' and both constituents of music blend and mingle indistinguishably in their hymns. As they lack the sublime Chorales of the Reformation period in Germany, so they lack the grave and meditative psalms for which Bach made his melodies.

The origins of the Italian theatre were closely connected with the services of the *Laudesi*. And here it has to be distinctly pointed out that the evolution of the Sacred Drama in Italy followed a different course from that with which we are familiar in France and England. Miracle-plays and Mysteries, properly so called, do not appear to have been common among the Italians in the early middle ages. There is, indeed, one exception to this general statement, which warns us to be cautious, and which proves that the cyclical sacred play had been exhibited at least in one place at a very early date. At Cividale, in the district of Friuli, a *Ludus Christi*, embracing the principal events of Christian history from the Passion

[1] Carducci, *Dello Svolgimento della Letteratura Nazionale*, p. 90.

to the Second Advent, was twice acted, in 1298 and 1303. From the scanty notices concerning it, we are able to form an opinion that it lasted over three days, that it was recited by the clergy, almost certainly in Latin, and that the representation did not take place in church.[1] The Friulian *Ludi Christi* were, in fact, a Mystery of the more primitive type, corresponding to Greban's *Mystère de la Passion* and to our Coventry or Widkirk Miracles. But, so far as present knowledge goes, this sacred play was an isolated phenomenon, and proved unfruitful of results. We are only able to infer from it, what the close intercourse of the Italians with the French would otherwise make evident, that Mysteries were not entirely unknown in the peninsula. Yet it seems clear, upon the other hand, that the two forms of the sacred drama specific to Italy, the Umbrian *Divozione* and the Florentine *Sacra Rappresentazione*, were not a direct outgrowth from the Mystery. We have to trace their origin in the religious practices of the *Laudesi*, from which a species of dramatic performance was developed, and which placed the sacred drama in the hands of these lay confraternities.

At first the *Disciplinati di Gesù* intoned their Lauds in the hall of the Company, standing before the crucifix or tabernacle of a saint, as they are represented in old wood-cuts.[2] From simple singing they passed to antiphonal chaunting, and thence made a natural transition to dialogue, and lastly to dramatic action.

[1] See Muratori, *Rer. Ital. Script.* xxiv. 1205, and *ibid.* 1209, Friulian Chronicle.

[2] See the frontispiece to *Laude di Feo Belcari e di altri.*

To trace the steps of this progress is by no means easy; nor must we imagine that it was effected wholly within the meeting-places of the confraternities without external influence. Though the Italians may not have brought the Miracle-play to the perfection it attained among the Northern nations, they were, as we have seen, undoubtedly aware of its existence. Furthermore, they were familiar with ecclesiastical shows but little removed in character from that form of medieval art. Representations of the manger at Bethlehem made part of Christmas ceremonies in Umbria, as we learn from a passage in the works of S. Bonaventura referring to the year 1223.[1] Nor were occasions wanting when pageants enlivened the ritual of the Church. Among liturgical dramas, enacted by priests and choristers at service time, may be mentioned the descent of the Angel Gabriel at the feast of the Annunciation, the procession of the Magi at Epiphany, the descent of the dove at Pentecost, and the Easter representation of a sepulchre from which the body of Christ had been removed. Thus the *Laudesi* found precedents in the Liturgy itself for introducing a dramatic element into their offices.

Having assumed a more or less dramatic form, the Laud acquired the name of *Divozione* as early as the middle of the fourteenth century. It was written in various lyric metres, beginning with six-lined stanzas in *ottonari*, passing through hendecasyllabic *sesta rima*, and finally settling down into *ottava rima*, which became the common stanza for all forms of popular

[1] D' Ancona, *Or. del T. op. cit.* vol. i. p. 109.

poetry in the fifteenth century.[1] The Passion of our Lord formed the principal theme of the *Divozioni*; for the *Laudesi* were bound by their original constitution to a special contemplation of His suffering upon the cross for sinners. The Perugian Chronicles refer to compositions of this type under the name of *Corrotto*, or song of mourning. In its highest form it was the passionate outpouring of Mary's anguish over her crucified Son—the counterpart in poetry to the *Pietà* of painting, for which the Giottesque masters, the Umbrian school, Crivelli, and afterwards Mantegna, reserved the strongest exhibition of their powers as dramatists. We have already seen with what a noble and dramatic dialogue Jacopone da Todi initiated this species of composition.[2] At the same time, the *Divozioni* and the Lauds from which they sprang, embraced a wide variety of subjects, following the passages of Scripture appointed to be read in church on festivals and Sundays. Thus the Laud for Advent dramatised the Apocalypse and introduced the episode of Antichrist. The story of the Prodigal furnished a theme for the vigil when that parable was used. It was customary to sing these compositions in the oratories after the discipline of the confraternity had been duly performed; and that they were sung, is a

[1] The phases of this progress from *ottonari* to *ottava rima* have been carefully traced by D' Ancona (*op. cit.* vol. i. pp. 151–165). *Ottonari* are lines of eight syllables with a loose trochaic rhythm, in which great licences of extra syllables are allowed. The stanza rhymes *a b a b c c*. The *sesta rima* of the transition has the same rhyming structure. The *Corrotto* by Jacopone da Todi, analysed above, shows a similar system of rhymes to that of some Latin hymns: *a a a b c c c b*, the *b* rhyme in *ato* being carried through the whole poem.

[2] See above, pp. 292–294, and Appendix.

fact of importance which must never be forgotten. Every Company had its own collection of dramatic Lauds, forming a cycle of sacred melodramas, composed with no literary end and no theatrical effect in view, but with the simple purpose of expressing by dialogue the substance of a Scripture narrative.

An inventory of the Perugian Confraternity of S. Domenico, dated in the year 1339, includes wings and crowns for sixty-eight angels, masks for devils, a star for the Magi, a crimson robe for Christ, black veils for the Maries, two lay figures of thieves, a dove to symbolise the Holy Ghost, a coat of mail for Longinus, and other properties which prove that not Passion-plays alone but dramas suited to Epiphany, Pentecost and the Anunciation must have been enacted at that period. Yet we have no exact means of ascertaining when the *Laudesi* left their oratories and began to recite *Divozioni* with action in church or on the open square. The Compagnia del Gonfalone are said to have presented a play to the Roman people in the Coliseum in 1260; but though the brotherhood was founded in that year, it is more than doubtful whether their famous Passion dates from so early an epoch.[1] By the year 1375 it had become customary for *Laudesi* to give representations in church, accompanied by a sermon from the pulpit. The audience assembled in the nave, and a scaffold was erected along the screen

[1] D' Ancona, *op. cit.* p. 108. At p. 282 he gives some curious details relating to the Coliseum Passion in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In 1539 it was suppressed by Paul III., because the Romans, infuriated by the drama of the Crucifixion, were wont to adjourn from the Flavian amphitheatre to the Ghetto, and begin a murderous crusade against the Jews!

which divided the nave and transepts from the choir. Here the brethren played their pieces, while the preacher at appropriate intervals addressed the people, explaining what they were about to see upon the stage or commenting on what had been performed.[1] The actors were the Chorus, the preacher the Choregus. The stage was technically called *talamo*.[2] It had a large central compartment, corresponding to the 'Logeion' of the Attic theatre, with several smaller rooms termed *luoghi deputati*, and galleries above reserved for the celestial personages. The actors entered from a central and two side doors called *reggi*.

These Umbrian *Divozioni* form a link between the Laud of the thirteenth and the *Sacra Rappresentazione* of the fifteenth century. They still—in form at least, if not in sacred character—survive in the *Maggi* of the Tuscan peasantry, which are yearly acted among the villages of the Lucchese and Pistojese highlands.[3] It is difficult to say how far we are justified in regarding them as wholly different in type from the Northern Miracle-plays. That they originated in the oratories of lay brotherhoods, and that they retained the character of Lauds to be sung after they had assumed dramatic shape, may be reckoned as established points. Moreover, they lack the cyclical extension and the copious admixture of grotesquely comic elements which mark

[1] In the directions for a 'Devotione de Veneredì sancto,' analysed by D'Ancona (*op. cit.* pp. 176–182), we read: '*predica, e como fa signo* che Cristo sia posto in croce, li Judei li chiavano una mano e poi l'altra' .... 'a quello loco quando Pilato comanda che Cristo sia posto a la colona, *lo Predicatore tase.*'

[2] Ducange explains *thalamum* by *tabulatum*.

[3] See Appendix to vol. ii. of D'Ancona's *Origini del Teatro*.

the French and English Mysteries. Yet we have already seen that such Mysteries were not entirely unknown in Italy, and that the liturgical drama, performed by ecclesiastics, had been from early times a part of Church ceremonial on holy days. We are, therefore, justified in accepting the *Divozioni* as the Italian species of a genus which was common to the medieval nations. The development of Gothic architecture in Central Italy might furnish an illustration. Its differentiation from the grander and more perfect type of French and English Gothic does not constitute a separate style.

To bridge the interval between the *Divozione*, used in Umbria, and the *Sacra Rappresentazione*, as it appeared at Florence, is rendered impossible by the present lack of documents. Still there seems sufficient reason to believe that the latter was evolved from the former within the precincts of the confraternities. In the *Sacra Rappresentazione* the religious drama of Italy reached its highest point of development, and produced a form of art peculiar to Florence and the Tuscan cities. Though it betrays certain affinities to the Northern Miracle-play, which prove familiarity with the French *Mystères* on the part at least of some among the playwrights, it is clearly a distinct kind. As in the case of the Umbrian *Divozioni*, so here the absence of grotesque episodes is striking; nor do we find connected series of *Sacre Rappresentazioni*, embracing the Christian history in a cyclical dramatic work. This species flourished for about fifty years, from 1470 to 1520. These dates are given approximately; for though we know that the Sacred Drama

of Florence did not long survive the second decade of the sixteenth century, we cannot ascertain the period of its origin. The *Sacre Rappresentazioni* we possess in print, almost all written within the last thirty years of the fifteenth century, present so marked a similarity of style and structure that they must have been preceded by a series of experiments which fixed and conventionalised their form. Like the *Divozioni*, they were in the hands of confraternities, who caused them to be acted at their own expense. Since these Companies were wealthy, and included members of the best Florentine families, their plays were put upon the stage with pomp. The actors were boys belonging to the brotherhoods, directed by a Chorodidascalus called *Festajuolo*. S. Antonino, the good archbishop, promoted the custom of enrolling youths of all classes in religious Companies, seeking by such influences to encourage sound morality and sober living. The most fashionable brotherhoods were those of San Bastiano or Del Freccione, Del Vangelista or Dell' Aquila, Dell' Arcangelo Raffaello or Della Scala—the name of the saint or his ensign being indifferently used. Representations took place either in the oratory of the Company, or in the refectory of a convent. Meadows at Fiesole and public squares were also chosen for open-air performances.[1] The *libretti* were composed in octave stanzas, with passages of *terza rima*, and were sung to a recitative air. Interludes of part-songs, with accompani-

[1] In the prologues of the later comedies of learning (*commedia erudita*) allusions to the rude style of Fiesolan shows are pretty frequent. The playwrights speak of them as our Elizabethan dramatists spoke of Bartholomew Fair. The whole method of a Fiesolan *Sacra Rappresentazione* is well explained in the induction to the play of *Abraam e Sara*

ment of lute and viol, enlivened the simple *cantilena*; and there is no doubt, from contemporary notices, that this music was of the best. The time selected was usually after vespers. The audience were admitted free of cost, but probably by invitation only to the friends and relatives of the young actors. *Sacra Rappresentazione* was the generic name of the show; but we meet with these subordinate titles, *Festa*, *Mistero*, *Storia*, *Vangelo*, *Figura*, *Esemplo*, *Passione*, *Martirio*, *Miracolo*, according to the special subject-matter of the play in question.

D' Ancona, in his book on the Origins of the Italian Drama, suggests that the *Sacre Rappresentazioni* were developed by a blending of the Umbrian *Divozioni* with the civic pageants of S. John's day at Florence. This theory is plausible enough to deserve investigation; especially as many points relating to the nature of the performances will be elucidated in the course of the enquiry. We must, however, be cautious not to take for granted that D' Ancona's conclusions have been proved. The researches of that eminent literary

(Siena, 1581). A father and his son set out from Florence, at the boy's request:

Et vo che noi andiamo
a Fiesolani poggi,
Ch' io mi ricordo c' hoggi
una festa non più vista
Mai piu el Vangelista
vi fa e rappresenta.

On the road they wonder, will the booth be too full for them to find places, will they get hot by walking fast up hill, will their clothes be decent? They meet the Festajuolo at the booth-door, distracted because:

manca una voce
Et è ito un veloce
a Firenze per lui.

Voce was the technical name for the actor.

antiquarian, in combination with those made by Professor Monaci, are but just beginning to throw light on this hitherto neglected topic.

From the Chroniclers of the fifteenth century we have abundant testimony that in all parts of Italy sacred and profane shows formed a prominent feature of municipal festivals, and were exhibited by the burghers of the cities when they wished to welcome a distinguished foreigner, or to celebrate the election of their chief magistrates.[1] Thus Sigismund, King of the Romans, was greeted at Lucca in 1432 by a solemn triumph. Perugia gratified Eugenius IV. in 1444 with the story of the Minotaur, the tragedy of Iphigenia, the Nativity and the Ascension.[2] The popular respect for S. Bernardino found expression at Siena in a pageant, when the Papal Curia, in 1450, issued letters for his canonisation.[3] Frederick III. was received in 1452 at Naples with the spectacle of the Passion. Leonora of Aragon, on her way through Rome in 1473 to Ferrara, witnessed a series of pantomimes, profane and sacred, splendidly provided by Pietro Riario, the Cardinal of San Sisto.[4] The triumphs of the Popes on entering office filled the streets of Rome with dramatic exhibitions, indifferently borrowed from Biblical and classic history. At Parma in 1414 the students celebrated the election of Andrea di Sicilia to a chair in their university by a procession

[1] See D' Ancona, *op. cit.* pp. 245–267. Compare the section on 'Geselligkeit und die Feste' in Burckhardt's *Cultur der Renaissance in Italien.*

[2] Graziani, *Arch. Stor.* xvi. 344.

[3] Allegretti, Muratori, xxxiii. 767.

[4] Corio, quoted by me, *Age of the Despots*, p. 357.

of the Magi.[1] When the head of S. Andrew entered Rome in 1462, the citizens and prelates testified their joy with figurative pomps.[2] Viterbo in the same year enjoyed a variety of splendid exhibitions, Cardinal vying with Cardinal in magnificence, upon the festival of Corpus Domini.[3]

The pageants above-mentioned formed but prolusions to the yearly feast of S. John at Florence.[4] Florence had, as it were, the monopoly of such shows; and we know from many sources that Florentine artists were employed in distant cities for the preparation of spectacles which they had brought to perfection in their own town. An extract from Marco Palmieri's Chronicle, referring to the year 1454, brings this Midsummer rejoicing vividly before the reader's mind.[5] It is an accurate description of the order followed at that period in the exhibition of pantomimic pageants by the guilds and merchants of the town. 'On the 22nd day of June the Cross of S. Maria del Fiore moved first, with all the clergy and children, and behind them seven singing men. Then the Companies of James the wool-shearer and Nofri the shoemaker, with some thirty boys in white and angels.

[1] See D'Ancona, *op. cit.* p. 245, and compare the account of a similar show in Galvano Flamma's *Chronicle of Milan.*

[2] *Pii Secundi Commentarii* (Romæ, 1584), viii. 365.

[3] Niccolò della Tuccia, *Cron. di Viterbo* (Firenze, Vieusseux, 1872), p. 84.

[4] Look above in chapter i. pp. 50–53, for passages from Goro Dati's Chronicle and other sources, touching on the summer festivals of Florence.

[5] This passage from Palmieri's MS. will be found, together with full information on the subject of S. John's Day, in Cambiagi, *Memorie istoriche riguardanti le feste, etc.* (Firenze, Stamp. Gran-ducale, 1766), p. 65.

Thirdly, the Tower (*edifizio*) of S. Michael, whereupon stood God the Father in a cloud (*nuvola*); and on the Piazza, before the Signoria, they gave the show (*rappresentazione*) of the Battle of the Angels, when Lucifer was cast out of heaven. Fourthly, the Company of Ser Antonio and Piero di Mariano, with some thirty boys clothed in white and angels. Fifthly, the Tower of Adam, the which on the Piazza gave the show of how God created Adam and Eve, with the Temptation by the serpent and all thereto pertaining. Sixthly, a Moses upon horseback, attended by many mounted men of the chiefs in Israel and others. Seventhly, the Tower of Moses, which upon the Piazza gave the show of the Delivery of the Law. Eighthly, many Prophets and Sibyls, including Hermes Trismegistus and others who foretold the Incarnation of our Lord.' With this list Palmieri proceeds at great length, reckoning in all twenty-two Towers. The procession, it seems, stopped upon its passage to exhibit tableaux; and these were so arranged that the whole Scripture history was set forth in dumb show, down to the Last Day. The representation of each tableau and the moving of the pageant through the streets and squares of Florence lasted sixteen hours. It will be observed that, here at least, a cyclical exposition of Christian doctrine, corresponding to the comprehensive Mysteries of the North, was attempted in pantomime. The Towers, we may remark in passing, were wooden cars, surmounted with appropriate machinery, on which the actors sat and grouped themselves according to their subject. They differed in no essentials from the Triumphal Chariots of carnival time, as described by

Vasari in his Lives of Piero di Cosimo and Pontormo. From an anonymous Greek writer who visited Florence in the train of John Palæologus, we gather some notion of the effect produced upon a stranger by these pageants.[1] He describes the concourse of the Florentines, and gives the measure of his own astonishment by saying: 'They work prodigies in this feast, and miracles, or at least the representation of miracles.'

Vasari in his Life of Il Cecca contributes much valuable information concerning the machinery used in the shows of S. John's Day.[2] The piazza of the Duomo was covered in with a broad blue awning—similar, we may suppose, to that veil of deeper and lighter azure bands which forms the background to Fra Lippi's 'Crowning of the Virgin.' This was sown with golden lilies, and was called a Heaven. Beneath it were the clouds, or *Nuvole*, exhibited by various civic guilds. They were constructed of substantial wooden frames, supporting an almond-shaped aureole, which was thickly covered with wool, and surrounded with lights and cherub faces. Inside it sat the person who represented the saint, just as Christ and Madonna are represented in the pictures of the Umbrian school. Lower down, projected branches made of iron, bearing children dressed like angels, and secured by waistbands in the same way as the fairies of our transformation scenes. The wood-work and the wires were hidden from sight by wool and cloth, plentifully

[1] D' Ancona, *op. cit.* p. 205. This use of the term Miracle seems to indicate that the Florentines applied to them the generic term for Northern Sacred Plays.

[2] Lemonnier's edition, vol. v.

sprinkled with tinsel stars. The whole moved slowly on the backs of bearers concealed beneath the frame. Vasari attributes the first invention of these and similar *ingegni* to Filippo Brunelleschi. Their similarity to what we know about the *pegmata* of Roman triumphs, renders this assertion probable. Brunelleschi's study of ancient art may have induced him to adapt a classical device to the requirements of Christian pageantry. When designed on a colossal scale and stationary, these *Nuvole* were known by the name of *Paradiso.* Another prominent feature in the Midsummer Show was the procession of giants and giantesses mounted upon stilts, and hooded with fantastic masks. Men marched in front, holding a pike to balance these unwieldy creatures; but Vasari states that some specialists in this craft were able to walk the streets on stilts six cubits high, without assistance. Then there were *spiritelli*—lighter and winged beings, raised aloft to the same height, and shining down like genii from their giddy altitude in sunlight on the crowd.

Whether we are right or not in assuming with D'Ancona that the *Sacra Rappresentazione* was a hybrid between the Umbrian *Divozione* and these pageants, there is no doubt that the Florentine artists, and *Ingegnieri*, were equal to furnishing the stage with richness. The fraternities spared no expense, but secured the services of the best designers. They also employed versifiers of repute to compose their libretti. It must be remembered that these texts were written for boys, and were meant to be acted by boys. Thus there came into existence a peculiar type of sacred drama, displaying something childish in its style, but

taxing the ingenuity of scene-painters, mechanicians, architects, musicians, and poets, to produce a certain calculated theatrical effect. When we remember how these kindred arts flourished in the last decades of the fifteenth century, we are justified in believing that the *Sacre Rappresentazioni* offered a spectacle no less beautiful than curious and rare.

An examination of a few of these plays in detail will help us to understand one of the most original products of the popular Italian literature. With this object, I propose to consider the three volumes of reprints, edited with copious illustrations by Professor Alessandro d' Ancona.[1] But before proceeding to render an account of the forty-three plays included in this collection, it will be well to give some notice of the men who wrote them, to describe their general character, and to explain the manner of their presentation on the stage.

The authors of *Sacre Rappresentazioni* are frequently anonymous; but Lorenzo de' Medici, Antonio Alamanni, Bernardo Pulci and his wife Monna Antonia contribute each a sacred drama. The best were written by Feo Belcari and Castellano Castellani. Of the latter very little is known, except that in the year 1517 he exercised the priestly functions at Florence and was a prolific writer of Lauds. Feo Belcari, a Florentine citizen, born in 1410, held civic offices of distinction during the ascendancy of Casa Medici. He was a man of birth and some learning, who devoted himself to the production of literature in prose and verse intended for popular edification. His Lauds are

[1] *Sacre Rappresentazioni*, Florence, Lemonnier, 3 vols. 1872.

among the best which have descended from the fifteenth century, and his translation of the Lives of the Fathers into Tuscan is praised for purity of style. When he died, in 1484, 'poor, weak, and white-haired,' Girolamo Benivieni, the disciple of Savonarola and the greatest sacred singer of that age, composed his elegy in verses of mingled sweetness and fervour[1]:

Tace il celeste suon, già spenta e morta
È l' armonia di quella dolce lira,
Che 'l mondo afflitto or lascia, e 'l ciel conforta.
E come parimenti si sospira
Qui la sua morte, così in ciel s'allegra
Chi alla nuova armonia si volge e gira.
Felice lui che dalla infetta e negra
Valle di pianti al ciel n' è gito, e 'n terra
Lasciata ha sol la veste inferma ed egra,
Ed or dal mondo e dall' orribil guerra
De' vizi sciolto, il suo splendor vagheggia
Nel volto di Colui che mai non erra.

As regards their form, the *Sacre Rappresentazioni* are never divided into acts; but the copious stage-directions prove that the scenes were shifted, and in one or two instances secular interludes are introduced in the

[1] It may be not uninteresting to compare this *terza rima* with a passage written fifty years later by Michelangelo Buonarroti on his father's death, grander in style but less simply Christian:

Tu se' del morir morto e fatto divo,
Nè tem' or più cangiar vita nè voglia;
Che quasi senza invidia non lo scrivo.
Fortuna e 'l tempo dentro a vostra soglia
Non tenta trapassar, per cui s' adduce
Fra no' dubbia letizia e cierta doglia.
Nube non è che scuri vostra luce,
L' ore distinte a voi non fanno forza,
Caso o necessità non vi conduce.
Vostro splendor per notte non s' ammorza,
Nè crescie ma' per giorno, benchè chiaro,
Sie quand' el sol fra no' il caldo rinforza.

In the Appendix will be found translations.

pauses of the action.[1] The drama follows the tale or legend without artistic structure of plot; nor do the authors appear to have aimed, except in subordinate episodes, at much development of character. What they found ready to their hand in prose, they versified. The same fixed personages, and the same traditional phrases recur with singular monotony, proving that a conventional framework and style had become stereotyped. The end in view was religious edification. Therefore mere types of virtue in saints and martyrs, types of wickedness in tyrants and persecutors, sufficed alike for authors, actors, and audience. True dramatic genius emerges only in the minor parts, where a certain freedom of handling and effort after character-drawing are discernible. The success of the play depended on the movement of the story, and the attractions of the scenery, costumes and music. It was customary for an angel to prologise and to dismiss the audience[2]; but his place is once at least taken by a young man with a lute.[3] A more dramatic opening was occasionally attempted in a conversation between two boys of Florence, the one good and the other bad; and instead of the *licenza* the scene sometimes closed with a *Te Deum*, or a Laud, sung by the actors

[1] Cecchi's *Elevation of the Cross* aims at the dignity of a five-act tragedy; but it was not represented until 1589. *Santa Uliva* illustrates the interludes; and a very interesting example is supplied by the *Miracolo di S. Maria Maddalena*, where two boys prologise in dialogue, comment at intervals upon the action, and conclude the exhibition with a Laud.

[2] 'L'Angelo annunzia la festa,' is the common stage-direction at the beginning; and at the end 'L'Angelo dà licenza.'

[3] 'Constantino Imperatore,' *Sacre Rappr.* ii. 187. 'Un Giovine con la citara annunzia.'

and probably taken up by the spectators. Castellani in his *Figliuol Prodigo* made good use of the dramatic opening, gradually working the matter of his play out of a dialogue which begins with a smart interchange of Florentine chaff.[1] It would be useless even to attempt a translation of this scene. The raciness of its obsolete street-slang would evaporate, and the fibre of the piece is not strong enough to bear rude handling. It must suffice to indicate its rare dramatic quality. Students of our own Elizabethan literature may profitably compare this picture of manners with similar passages in *Hycke Scorner* or *Lusty Juventus*. But the Florentine interlude is more fairly representative of actual life than any part of our Moralities. Castellani's Prodigal Son, however, rises altogether to a higher artistic level than the ordinary; and the same may be said about the *Miracolo di S. Maria Maddalena*, where a simple dramatic motive is interwoven with the action of the whole piece and made to supply a proper ending.[2]

As a rule, the *Sacre Rappresentazioni* partook of the character of a religious service. Their tone is uniformly pious. Yet the spirit of the age and the nature of the Italians were alike unfavourable to piety of a true temper. Here it is unctuous, caressing, sentimental—anything but vigorous or virile. The monastic virtues are highly extolled; and an unwholesome view of life seen from the cloister by some would-be saint, who 'winks and shuts his apprehension up' to common facts of experience, is too often presented. Vice is

[1] *Op. cit.* vol. i. pp. 357–359.

[2] *Sacre Rappr.* i. 391. Cp. the *Abraam* quoted in a note above, p. 313.

sincerely condemned; yet the morality of these exhibitions cannot be applauded. Instead of the stern lessons of humanity conveyed in a drama like that of Athens or of England, the precepts of the pulpit and confessional are enforced with a childish simplicity that savours more of cloistral pietism than of true knowledge of the world. Mere belief in the intercession of saints and the efficacy of reliques is made to cover all crimes; while the anti-social enthusiasms of dreamy boys and girls are held up for imitation. We feel that we are reading what a set of feeble spiritual directors wrote with a touch of conscious but well-meaning insincerity for children. The glaring contrast between the professed asceticism of the fraternities and the future conduct of their youthful members in the world of the Renaissance leaves a suspicion of hypocrisy.[1] This impression is powerfully excited by Lorenzo de' Medici's *Rappresentazione di S. Giovanni e Paolo*, which was acted by his children. The tone is not, indeed, so unctuous as that of Castellani. Yet when we remember what manner of man was Lorenzo; when we reflect what parts were played by his sons, Piero and Leo X., upon the stage of Italy; the sanctimonious tone of its frigid octave stanzas fails to impose on our credulity.

An adequate notion of the scenic apparatus of the *Rappresentazioni* may be gathered from the stage-directions to *S. Uliva* and from the interludes described in Giovanmaria Cecchi's *Esaltazione della Croce*.[2] The latter piece was acted in Florence on the occasion of

[1] Compare, for example, Vespasiano's *naïve* astonishment at the virginity of the Cardinal di Portogallo with the protestations of chastity in the *Tre Pellegrini* (*Sacre Rappr.* iii. 467).

[2] *Sacre Rappr.* iii. p. 235 and p. 1.

Ferrando de' Medici's marriage to Cristina of Lorraine, in 1589. It belongs, therefore, to the very last of these productions. Yet, judging by Vasari's account of the *Ingegni*, we may assume that the style of presentation was traditional, and that a Florentine Company of the fifteenth century might have put a play upon the stage with at least equal pomp. The prose description of the apparatus and the interludes reads exactly like the narrative portion of Ben Jonson's Masques at Court, in which the poet awards due praise to the 'design and invention' of Master Inigo Jones and to the millinery of Signor Forobosco.[1] It was, indeed, a custom derived by England from Italy for the poet to set forth a minute record of his own designs together with their execution by the co-operating architects, scene-painters, musicians, dress-makers, and morris-dancers. The architect, says Cecchi, was one Taddeo di Leonardo Landini, a member of the Compagnia, skilled in sculpture as well as an excellent machinist. He arranged the field, or *prato*, of the Compagnia di S. Giovanni in the form of a theatre, covered with a red tent, and painted with pictures of the Cross considered as an instrument of shameful death, as a precious relique, and as the reward of virtue in this life. Emblems, scrolls and heraldic achievements completed the adornment of the theatre. When the curtain rose for the first time, Jacob was seen in a meadow, 'asleep with his head on certain stones, dressed in costly furs slung across his shoulder, with a thin shirt of fine linen beneath, cloth-of-silver stockings and fair buskins on his feet, and in his hand a gilt wand.' While he

[1] *Sacre Rappr.* p. 121. *Shakespeare Soc. Publ.* vol. xvii.

slept, heaven opened, and seven angels appeared, seated upon clouds, and making 'a most pleasant noise with horns, greater and less viols, lutes and organ . . . . the music of this and all the other interludes was the composition of Luca Bati, a man in this art most excellent.' When they had played and sung, the cloud disclosed, and showed a second heaven, where sat God the Father.[1] All the angels worshipped Him, and heaven increased in splendour. Then a ladder was let down, and God, leaning upon it, turned to Jacob and 'sang majestically to the sound of many instruments, in a sonorous bass voice.' Thereupon angels descended and ascended by the ladder, singing a hymn in honour of the Cross; and at last the clouds closed round, heaven disappeared, and Jacob woke from sleep. Such was the introduction to the drama. Between the first and second acts was shown, with no less exuberance of scenical resources, the exodus of Israel from Egypt; between the second and third, the miracle of Aaron's rod that blossomed; between the third and fourth, the elevation of the Brazen Serpent; between the fourth and fifth, the ecstasy of David dancing before the ark 'to the sound of a large lute, a violin, a trombone, but more especially to his own harp.' After the fifth act the play was concluded with a pageant of religious chivalry—the Knights of Malta, S. James, S. Maurice, and the Teutonic Order—who had fought for the Cross, and to whom, amid thunderings and lightnings, as they stood upon the stage, was granted the vision of 'Religion, habited in purest white, full of majesty, with the triple tiara and the crossed

[1] For the technical terms *Nuvola* and *Paradiso* see above, pp. 318, 319.

keys of S. Peter, holding in her hand a large and most resplendent cross, adorned with diamonds, rubies and emeralds.' The resources of a theatre which could place so many actors on the stage at once, and attempt the illusion of clouds and angels, bringing into play the machinery of transformation scenes, and enriching the whole with a varied accompaniment of music, must have been considerable. Those who have spent an hour in the Teatro Farnese at Parma, erected of wood for a similar occasion, may be able to summon by the aid of the imagination a shadow of this spectacle before their eyes. That the effect was not wholly grotesque, though the motives were so hazardous, can be understood from Milton's description of the descent of Mercy in his Christmas Ode.[1]

For the play of *S. Uliva*, though first known to us in a Florentine reprint of 1568, we may assume a more popular origin than that of Cecchi's Mystery of the Cross. It abounds in rare Renaissance combinations of pagan with Christian mythology. The action extended over two days and was interrupted at intervals by dumb shows and lyrical interludes connected only by a slight thread with the story. At one time a chase was brought upon the stage. On other occasions pictures, described with minute attention to details, were presented to the audience in Tableaux

[1] It is probable that the painting of the period yields a fair notion of the scenic effects attempted in these shows. Or, what is perhaps a better analogue, we can illustrate the pages of the libretti by remembering the terra-cotta groups of the Sacro Monte at Varallo. Designed by excellent artists and painted in accordance with the traditions of the Milanese school, it is not impossible that these life-size representations of Christ's Birth and Passion reproduce the Sacred Drama with fidelity.

Vivants. These pictures vividly recall the style of Florentine masters, Piero di Cosimo or Sandro Botticelli. 'In the interval,' say the stage-directions to the players, 'you will cause three women, well-beseen, to issue, one of them attired in white, one in red, the other in green, with golden balls in their hands, and with them a young man robed in white; and let him, after looking many times first on one and then on another of these damsels, at last stay still and say the following verses, gazing at her who is clad in green.' This is the Masque of Hope. In another part the fable of Narcissus has to be presented, and directions are given for the disappearance of Echo, who is to repeat the final syllables of the boy's lament. 'After he has uttered all these complaints, let him thrice with a loud voice cry slowly Ahimè, Ahimè, Ahimè! and let the nymph reply, and having thus spoken let him stretch himself upon the ground and lie like one dead; and within a little space let there issue forth four or more nymphs clad in white, without bows and with dishevelled hair, who, when they have come where the youth lies dead, shall surround him in a circle, and at last having wrapped him in a white cloth, carry him within, singing this song[1]:

Fly forth in bliss to heaven,
Thou happy soul and fair,
To find thy planet there, and haunt the skies;
Leaving the tears and sighs
Of this low-lying earth,
Where man hath sorry mirth, as thou dost know!
Bask in the fervent glow
Of that pure light divine,

[1] *Sacre Rappr.* iii. 270.

Which on thy path shall shine, and be thy guide.
Nay, soul, thou hast not died,
But still more life hast thou,
Albeit unbodied now thou art at rest.
O soul, divinely blest,
Enjoy the eternal mind,
There dwelling unconfined through nights and days!
Heaven's angels stand and gaze
Upon thy glorious eyes,
Up there in Paradise! In crowds they come!
Now hast thou found thy home:
Now art thou blithe and blest:
Dwell now for aye at rest, pure placid soul!

For another interlude a May-day band of girls attired in flower-embroidered dresses and youths with crowns of ivy on their heads are marshalled by Dan Cupid. They sing a song of which the following is a free translation:

Let earth herself adorn
With grasses and fresh flowers,
And let cold hearts, these hours, in love's fire burn.
Let field, let forest turn
To bloom this morn of May,
That the whole world to-day may leap and sing.
Let love within us spring,
Banishing winter's smart,
Waking within our heart sweet thoughts and fair.
Let little birds in air
Sing yonder boughs above;
Each young man tell his love to his own maid;
And girls through mead and glade,
With honest eyes and meek
Fixed on their lovers, seek true troth to plight.
From field and mountain height
To-day cold snows are fled;
No clouds sail overhead; up springs clear morn.
Let violets be born,
Let leaves and grasses sprout,

And children wander out, garlands to twine.
In every dingle shine
Flowers white and blue and red,
Roses and lilies shed perfume around.
Maidens with May-blooms crowned
Through copse and meadow stray,
Singing their thoughts to-day, their sweet thoughts pure.
Let none be too demure;
Innocence marries mirth,
And from the jocund earth green laurels spring.
Come, Love, and blessings bring;
Chase sorrow, scatter care;
Make all men happy there, soul-full of ease.
Soothe pain, soothe jealousies,
That with their restless flame
Feed on man's heart: no shame, no grief be near.

Night and the God of Sleep again amuse the audience with an allegorical masque; and the seven deadly sins, figured as men, women and beasts, march across the stage. At no great distance from a vision of Judgment, the Sirens are introduced after this fashion: 'Now goes the King to Rome; and you, meanwhile, make four women, naked, or else clothed in flesh-coloured cloth, rise waist-high from the sea, with tresses to the wind, and let them sing as sweetly as may be the ensuing stanzas twice; in the which while shall two or three of you come forth, and seem to fall asleep on earth at the hearing of the song, except one only, who shall be armed, and with closed ears shall pass the sea unstayed, and let the said women take those who sleep and cast them in the waves.' When we reach Uliva's wedding, we meet with the following quaint rubric: 'If you wish to beguile the weariness caused by the length of the show, and to make the spectators take more delight in this than in any other

interlude, then you must give them some taste of these bridals by providing a general banquet; but if you mislike the expense, then entertain the players only.' It would seem that *S. Uliva* was acted on the *prato* of the confraternity, where a booth had been erected.

The forty-three plays comprised in D'Ancona's volumes may be arranged in three classes—those which deal with Bible stories or Church doctrine based on Scripture; dramatised Legends of the saints; and *Novelle* transformed into religious fables. Among the first sort may be mentioned plays of Abraham and Isaac, Joseph, Tobias and Raphael, and Esther; the Annunciation, the Nativity, S. John in the Desert, Christ preaching in the Temple, the Conversion of the Magdalen, the Prodigal Son, the Passion and Resurrection of our Lord, and the Last Judgment. The *Natività di Cristo* opens with a pastoral reminding us of French *Mystères* and English Miracle-plays.[1] The shepherds are bivouacking on the hills of Bethlehem when the angel appears to them. For Tudde, Harvye, Houcken, and Trowle of our Chester play, we find these Southern names, Bobi di Farucchio, Nencio di Pucchio, Randello, Nencietto, and so forth. But the conduct of the piece is the same. The Italian hinds discuss their cheese and wine and bread just as the clowns of Cheshire talk about 'ale of Hatton,' 'sheep's head sowsed in ale,' and 'sour milk.' Such points of similarity are rare, however; for the *Rappresentazioni* were the growth of more refined conditions, and showed their origin in sentiment and pathos. The anonymous play of *Mary Magdalen* rises to a higher level of dra-

[1] *Sacre Rappr.* i. 193. See Shakespeare Society's Publications, i. 119.

matic art than any sacred play in English.[1] Her story, as told in these scenes, is the versified *novella* of a Vittoria Accoramboni or a Bella Imperia converted by the preaching of S. Bernardino or Savonarola. It might have happened in Rome or Florence or Perugia. Magdalen, the lady of noble blood but famous with ill-fame, fair of person and of heaven-bright countenance, who dresses splendidly and lives with many lovers, spending her days in the pleasure of rich banquets and perfumed baths, delighting her heart with the music of lyres and flutes and the voices of young men, appears before us with a reality that proves how deep a hold upon the poet's fancy her picturesque tale had taken. Martha, her good but commonplace sister, forms a foil to the more impassioned and radiant figure of Magdalen. She has been cured by Christ, and has heard Him preach. Now she entreats her sister but to go and listen, for never man spake words like His. Magdalen scoffs: 'Why should I be damned because I do not follow your strange life? There is time for me to enjoy my youth, and then to make my peace with God, and Paradise will open wide for me at last.' Her friend Marcella enters with another argument: 'O Magdalen, if you did but know how fair and gracious are his eyes! Surely he has come forth straight from heaven; could you but see him once, your heart would never be divided from him.' This touches the right spring in Magdalen's mind. She will not go to hear the words of Christ, but the face and form that came from Paradise allure her. Besides, in the church where Christ will preach, there will be found new lovers and men in

[1] *Sacre Rappr.* i. 255.

multitudes to gaze at her. Her maidens array her in gold and crimson, and bind up her yellow hair; and forth she rides in all her bravery surrounded by her suitors. What follows may best be told by a translation of the stage-directions and a passage of the play itself.

And at these last verses Jesus enters the temple; and having gone up into the pulpit, he begins to preach and to say with a loud voice, 'Homo quidam peregre proficiscens vocavit servos suos et tradidit illis bona sua.' Now comes Magdalen with her company, and her young men prepare for her a seat before the pulpit, and she in all her pomp takes her place upon it, regarding her own pleasure, nor paying heed as yet to Jesus. Afterward, Jesus looks at her and goes on preaching, always keeping his most holy gaze bent upon her; and she, after the first stanza of the sermon, looks at him, and her eyes meet those of Jesus. Then he goes on preaching, and says as follows:

A certain lord who on a journey went,
Called unto him each of his serving men,
And of his goods gave them arbitrament:
To one he dealt five talents, to one ten,
To another two, to try their heart's intent,
And see how far they should be careless; then
Unto the last he left but one alone:
According to their powers, he charged each one.

And when he had departed, instantly
That servant unto whom he gave the five,
Went forth, and labouring with much industry,
Increased them, and therewith so well did thrive
That other five he gained immediately,
To render when his master should arrive;
He who received but twain, did even so,
And added to his sum another two.

But he on whom one talent was bestowed,
Went forthwith and concealed it in the soil:
Careless, unthankful for the debt he owed,
While he hath peace, he seeks but strife and toil:
Called like his fellows in that lord's abode,
He answers not, but doth himself despoil;

And, as a worthless steward, hides away
The money of his master day by day.

Woe to thee, slothful servant and remiss,
That hast thy talent buried in the ground!
When reckoning comes, thou'lt yield account for this!
Nay, think how stern and rigorous he'll be found!
Weep, then, in time for what thou'st done amiss,
Before the trumpets of the judgment sound:
O soul, I tell thee thou hast gone astray,
Hiding thy talent in the earth away!

He who on earth sets his affections still,
Forgetful of the promised heavenly treasure;
He who loves self more than his Maker's will,
And in ill-doing finds continual pleasure;
He who remembers not that sin must kill,
Nor thinks how Hell will plague him above measure;
He who against himself makes fast heaven's gate;
Hideth in earth his talent till too late.

He who loves father, mother, more than God,
Not reckoning His great gifts bestowed on man;
He who the path of worldly gain hath trod,
Publishes for himself damnation's ban:
Woe, woe to that bad servant sunk in fraud,
Who leaves the good and doth what ill he can!
He who on this world seeks his joy to find,
His talent hides in earth, perversely blind.

He who is grasping, proud, discourteous, base,
Who dreameth not that he may come to want,
Who seeks for flattery, praise, and pride of place,
Lording it with high airs and arrogant;
Who to the world gives all, and still doth chase
Delight in songs and pomps exorbitant;
Who in this life is fain to rest and sleep—
His talent in the earth lies hidden deep.

Woe for that servant who through negligence
Hath hearkened not to the command divine!
Yea, he shall hear the dreadful doom: Go hence!
Go forth, accursed, in endless fire to pine!
There shall be then no time for penitence:
Bound hand and foot with punishment condign,
He shall abide among lost souls beneath,
Where is great weeping and great gnashing of teeth.

O soul, so full of sins, what shalt thou do?
Of all thy countless crimes abominable,
Look to the end! Look to it! Hell for you
Lies open, with damned folk innumerable!
Whence thou shalt never issue, ever rue
In vain remorse and pangs intolerable!
Weep, soul, ah weep for thy most vile estate,
Now that repentance need not come too late!

Seek in this life to feel sincere contrition,
Before the judge so just and so severe
Summons thee to his throne, for inquisition
Into each sin, each thought that wandered here:
There shalt thou find no merciful remission,
But justice shall be dealt with truth austere;
And he who fails shall go to burn with shame
For ever, ever, in eternal flame.

Quis ex vobis centum oves habens,
Si forte unam ex illis perdiderit,
Nonne nonagintas novem dimittens
Et illam querit, donec ipsam invenerit?
Et cum invenerit, in humeros ponens,
Gaudens, in domum suam cito venerit,
And calls his kinsfolk and his friends to make
Festival for the new-found wanderer's sake?

The soul, she is that lost and wandering sheep;
Eternal God is the true shepherd: He
Seeks her, lest on his lamb the wolf should leap,
The fiend, who slays with guile and treachery.
He spends his life, her safe to seek and keep,
And leaves those ninety-nine in bliss to be;
And when he finds her, makes great joy in heaven,
With all the angelic host, o'er one forgiven.

There was a father who had children twain;
The younger son began to speak and pray
That he might take his share, for he was fain,
Furnished therewith, from home to wend his way:
The father gently urged him to remain,
But at the last was bounden to obey:
Far, far away he roamed, and spent his all,
Sad wretch, on carnal joys and prodigal.

But when he came to want, repenting sore,
Unto his father, all ashamed, he knelt;
His father clothed him with new robes, and bore
Even more tender love than first he felt:
So doth high God, who lives for evermore,
Unto the souls that with repentance melt;
Let them but seek his love with contrite will,
He is most merciful, and pardons still.

Soul, thou hast wounded many hearts, I wis,
Dwelling in delicate and vain delight;
With many a lover thou wouldst toy and kiss,
And art o'erfull of evil appetite;
Thy heart is big with strifes and jealousies:
Turn unto me; I wait to wash thee white;
That with the rest thy talent thou may'st double,
And dwell with them in heaven secure from trouble.

After the blessing of Jesus, Magdalen, weeping, and with her head covered, can have no rest for the great confusion that she felt; and all the people wept, and in great astonishment were waiting agaze to see what should ensue.

O alma peccatrice, che farai?—Christ's voice with its recurrences of gravely sweet persuasion melts Magdalen's heart. She may not speak one word, until her sister has led her home and comforted her a space. Then she answers:

Deh, priega Iddio che m' allumini il core!

After this, left alone with her own soul, awakened to the purer consciousness that Christ has stirred, she takes the box of ointment, and, despoiled of all her goodly raiment, with her hair dishevelled, goes to the house of the Pharisee. There at last, with the breaking of the alabaster, she dissolves in tears, and her heart finds peace. In these scenes, if anywhere, we have the stuff from which the drama might have been evolved.

Magdalen is a living woman, such as Palma might have painted; and Christ is a real man gifted with power to penetrate the soul.

The *Figliuol Prodigo* illustrates the same effort on the poet's part to steep an old-world story in the vivid colours of to-day.[1] In the Prodigal himself we find a coarse-hearted villain, like Hogarth's Idle Apprentice —vain, silly, lustful, gluttonous, careless of the honour and love that belong to him in his father's home. The scenes with the innkeeper, the gamblers, and the ruffians, among whom he runs to ruin, portray the vulgar dissipations of Florence, and justify the common identification of taverns with places of ill-fame.[2] There is a touch of true pathos at the end of the play in the grief of the father who has lost his son. The conflict of feelings in the heart of the elder brother, vexed at first with the prodigal's reception, but melting into love and pity at the fervour of his penitence, is also not without dramatic spirit. At the very end 'a boy with the lyre' enters and 'speaks the moral of the parable.'[3]

The movement of these two plays is not impeded by the sanctity of the subject. When, however, the legend belongs more immediately to the narrative of Christ's life, the form of the Representation is more

[1] *Sacre Rappr.* i. 357.

[2] All the novelists might be cited to illustrate this point.

[3] At the end of the *Rappresentazione di un Pellegrino* (*Sacre Rappr.* iii. 430) a little farce is printed, bearing no relation to the play. It is a dialogue between a good and bad apprentice, who discuss the question of gambling. Here and in the *Figliuol Prodigo* and the induction to the *Miracolo di S. Maddalena* we have the elements of comedy, which, however, unfortunately came to nothing. These scenes remind us of Heywood's tavern pictures, Marston's 'Eastward Ho!' and other precious pieces of English Elizabethan farce.

severe. This is especially true of Castellani's *Cena e Passione*, where the incidents of the Last Supper, the Agony in the Garden, the trials before Pilate and Caiaphas, the Flagellation, and the Crucifixion are narrated with reverential brevity.[1] In reading these scenes, we must summon to our memory Luca della Robbia's bas-reliefs or the realistic groups of the Lombard Sacri Monti. The coloured terra-cotta figures in those chapels among the chestnut trees above the Sesia are but Castellani's poetry conveyed in tableaux, while the Florentine actors undoubtedly aimed at presenting by their grouping, dresses and attitudes a living image of such plastic work. But the peculiar pathos of the Italians found finer expression in picture or fresco—in Luini's 'Flagellation' at S. Maurizio or the pallid anguish of Tintoretto's women sunk beneath the Cross in the Scuola di San Rocco—than in the fluent stanzas of the sacred playwrights. On the walls of church or oratory the sweetness and languor of emotion became as dignified in beauty as the melodies of Pergolese, and its fervour touched at times the sublimity of tragic passion. Not words but plastic forms were ever the noblest vehicle of Italian feeling. Yet each kind of art may be profitably used to illustrate the other, and the simple phrases of the *Rappresentazioni* are often the best comments on finished works of painting. Here, for example, is Raphael's *Lo Spasimo* in words[2]:

> Oimè, figliuol, è questo il viso
> Ch' era tanto formoso e tanto bello?
> Omè, dove si specchia el paradiso

[1] *Sacre Rappr.* i. 304.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 319.

Oggi è percosso in tanto gran flagello !
Io vengo a morte, figliuol mio diletto,
Se non ti tengo nelle braccia stretto.

Mary faints, and the Magdalen supports her, weeping [1]:

Omè, che per dolor Maria vien meno :
Noi perderem la madre col figliuolo.
Pallido è il volto già tanto sereno,
Quale è tutto mutato pel gran duolo.
El polso manca, e nel sacrato seno
El cuor suo resta respirante solo.
Soccorso, aiuto ; ognun gli dia conforto,
Sendo aghiacciato il corpo e quasi morto.

The hearts of these rude poets were very tender for Mary, Mother of our Lord. There is a touching passage in the *Disputa al Tempio*, when Joseph and the Virgin are walking toward the Temple with the boy who is to them a sacred charge [2]:

Ioscf. I' guido e son guidato, e reggo quello
Che regge me, e muovo chi mi muove :
Pastor mi fo di quel ch' io son agnello ;
O quanta grazia in questo servo piove !
Maria. S' i' alzo gli occhi alquanto per vederlo,
Contemplo nel mirar cose alte e nuove.
Per la virtù di sua divina forma
L' amante ne l' amato si trasforma.

Something artless and caressing in these words

[1] *Sacre Rappr.* i. 229.

[2] This play ends with a pretty moralization of the episode that forms its motive, addressed by Mary to the people (*ib.* p. 240).

Figliuo' diletti, che cercate in terra
Trovar il figliuol mio, pietoso Iddio,
Non vi fermate in questa rozza terra,
Chè Jesù non istà nel mondo rio.
Chi vel crede trovar, fortement' erra,
E come stolto morrà nel disio.
Al tempio, chi lo vuol, venghi oggi drento,
Chè 'l viver vostro è come foglia al vento.

brings before us Luini's Joseph with his golden-brown robes and white hair, Mary in her blue and crimson with the beautiful braided curls of gold. The Magdalen, again, moves through all these solemn scenes with a grace peculiar to her story. The poet, like the painter, never forgets that her sins were forgiven *quia multum amavit.* She who in Luini's fresco at Lugano kneels with outstretched arms and long fair rippling loosened hair, beneath the Cross, is shown in the *Resurrezione di Gesù Cristo* upon her knees before the gardener whose one word tells her that she sees her risen Lord.[1] It is a scene from Fra Angelico, a touch of tenderness falling like a faint soft light athwart the mass of orthodox tradition.

The sympathy between these shows and the plastic arts may be still further traced in Belcari's *Dì del Giudizio.*[2] After the usual prologue an angel thrice blows the trumpet-blast that wakes the dead, crying aloud *Surgite!* Minos assembles his fiends, and Christ bids the archangel separate the good from the bad.[3] Michael, obedient to this order, seeks a hypocrite hidden among the just and sets him on the left hand, while Trajan is taken from the damned and placed among the saved. Solomon rises alone,[4] and remains undecided in the middle space, till Michael, charging him with carnal sin, forces him to take his station

[1] *Sacre Rappr.* i. 342. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 439.

[3] For these incidents we may think of Signorelli's huge angels and swarming devils at Orvieto. What follows suggests the Lorenzetti fresco at Pisa, and the Orcagna of the Strozzi Chapel. Fra Angelico and Fra Bartolommeo also supply pictorial parallels.

[4] Poetry forced Castellani to decide where Solomon should go; Lorenzetti left it vague.

with the goats. S. Peter now disputes with wicked friars who think to save themselves by pointing to their cowls and girdles. The poor appeal to S. Francis, but he answers that poverty is no atonement for a sinful life. Magdalen refuses help to women who have lived impenitent. Christ and Mary reply that the hour of grace is past. Then the representatives of the seven deadly sins step forth and reason with the virtuous—the proud man with the humble, the glutton with the temperate. Sons upbraid their fathers for neglect or evil education. Others thank God for the discipline that saved them in their youth. At the last Christ awards judgment, crying to the just: 'Ye saw me hungry and ye fed me, naked and ye clothed me!' and to the unjust: 'I was hungry and ye fed me not, naked and ye clothed me not.' Just and unjust answer, as in Scripture, with those words whereof the double irony is so dramatic. The damned are driven off to Hell, and angels open for the blessed the doors of Paradise.

The *Rappresentazioni* of the second class offer fewer points of interest; almost the sole lesson they inculcate being the superiority of the monastic over the secular life. S. Anthony leaves the world in which he has lived prosperous and wealthy, incarcerates his sister in a convent, and becomes a hermit.[1] Satan assembles the hosts of hell and makes fierce war upon his resolution; but the temptation is a poor affair, and Anthony gets through it by the help of an angel. The play ends with an assault of the foiled fiend of Avarice

[1] *Sacre Rappr.* ii. 33.

upon three rogues—Tagliagambe, Scaramuccia, and Carabello—who cut each other's throats over their ill-gotten booty. *S. Guglielmo Gualtero*, like S. Francis, sells all that he possesses, embraces poverty, and becomes a saint.[1] *S. Margaret* subdues the dragon, and is beheaded by a Roman prefect for refusing homage to the pagan deities.[2] *SS. Giovanni e Paolo* are Latin confessors of the conventional type.[3] The legends of the *Seven Sleepers*, *S. Ursula*, and *S. Onofrio* are treated after a like fashion. *S. Eufrasia* still further illustrates the medieval ideal of monastic chastity.[4] She leaves her betrothed husband and her mother to enter a convent. Nothing befalls her, and her life is good for nothing, except that she exhales the odour of conventual sanctity and dies. *S. Teodora* is a variation on the same theme.[5] She refuses Quintiliano, the governor of Asia, in marriage; and is sent to a bad house, whence Eurialo, a Christian, delivers her. Both are immediately despatched to execution. It is probable that the two last-mentioned plays were intended for representation within the walls of a nunnery. *S. Barbara* presents the same motive, with a more marked theological bias.[6] Dioscoro, the father of the saint, hears from his astrologers that she is fated to set herself against the old gods of his worship. To avert this calamity, he builds a tower with two windows, where he shuts her up in the company of orthodox pagan teachers. Barbara becomes learned in her retirement, and refuses, upon the authority of Plato, to pay homage to idols. Faith, instead of Love,

[1] *Sacre Rappr.* iii. 140. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 124. [3] *Ibid.* ii. 235.
[4] *Ibid.* ii. 269. [5] *Ibid.* ii. 323. [6] *Ibid.* ii. 71.

finds this new Danaë, in the person, not of Zeus, but of a priest despatched by Origen from Alexandria to convert her to Christianity. The princess learns her catechism, is baptised, and adds a third window to her tower, in recognition of the Trinity. It only remains for her father to torture her cruelly to death.

The outline of these stories is often singularly beautiful, and capable of poetic treatment. Remembering what Massinger and Decker made of the *Virgin Martyr*, we turn with curiosity to *S. Teodora* or *S. Ursula*. Yet we are doomed to disappointment. The ingenuous charm, again, which painters threw over the puerilities of the monastic fancy, is absent from these plays. Sodoma's legend of S. Benedict in fresco on the walls of Monte Oliveto, Carpaccio's romance of S. Ursula painted for her Scuola at Venice, are touched with the grace of a child's fairy-story. The *Rappresentazioni* eliminate all elements of mystery and magic from the fables, and reduce them to bare prose. The core of the myth or tale is rarely reached; the depths of character are never penetrated; and still the wizardry of wonderland is gone. In the hands of these Italian playwrights the most pregnant story of the Orient or North assumed the thin slight character of ordinary life. Its richness disappeared. Its beauty evanesced. Nothing remained but the dry bones of a *novella*. Indeed, the prose legends of the fourteenth century are far more fascinating than these dramatised tales of the Renaissance, which might be used to prove, if further proof were needed, that the Italian imagination is not in the highest sense romantic or fantastic, not far-reaching by symbol or by vision into the depths of

nature human and impersonal. The sense of infinity which gives value to Northern works of fancy, is unknown in Italy. Sir Thomas Mallory wrote of Arthur's passage into dreamland[1]: 'And when they were at the water's side, even fast by the banke hoved a little barge with many faire ladies in it, and among them all was a queene, and all they had blacke hoods, and they wept and shriked when they saw King Arthur.' The author of the *Tavola Ritonda* makes the event quite otherwise precise[2]:

E stando per un poco, ed ecco per lo mare venire una navicella, tutta coperta di bianco . . . e la nave s' accostò allo re, e alquante braccia uscirono della nave che presono lo re Artù, e visibilemente il misono nella nave, e portàrollo via per mare . . . si crede che la fata Morgana venisse per arte in quella navicella, e portòllo via in una isoletta di mare; e quivi morì di sue ferite, e la fata il sopellì in quella isoletta.

This anxiety after verification and distinctness is almost invariable in Italian literature. The very devil becomes a definite and oftentimes prosaic personage. External Nature is credited with no inner spirit, reaching forth from wood or wave or cloud to touch the soul of man in reverie or trance, or breaking on his charmed senses in the form of gnome or water-sprite or fairy. Men and women move in clear sunlight, disenchanted of the gloom or glory, as of star-irradiate vapour, which a Northern mytho-poet wraps around them, making their humanity thereby more poignant.

Those who care to connect the genius of a people with the country of their birth, may find the source of

[1] *La Mort d' Arthur* (Wright's edition), vol. iii. p. 331.

[2] Polidori's edition, vol. i. p. 542.

these mental qualities in the nobly beautiful, serene and gracious, but never mystical Italian land. The Latin Camœnæ have neither in ancient nor in modern years evoked the forms of mythic fable from that landscape. Far less is there the touch of Celtic or Teutonic inspiration—the light that never was on sea or land. The nightingales of Sorrento or Nettuno in no poet's vision have:

> Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery land forlorn.

Down the hillsides between Lucca and Pistoja, where the cypresses stand in rows and olives cast their shadows on the grey tilled soil, no lover has dreamed he met Queen Guinevere in spring riding through flowers with Lancelot. Instead of Morgan le Fay, turning men to lichened and mist-moistened stones upon the heath, the Italian witch was ever Locusta, the poison-brewer, or Alcina, the temptress.

This peculiarity of the Italian genius made their architects incapable of understanding Gothic. This deprived Italian art of that sublimity which needs a grain of the grotesque for its perfection, a touch of the uncouth for its accomplishment. The instinct of poets and artists alike induced them to bring mystery within the sphere of definition, to limit the marvellous by reducing it to actual conditions, and to impoverish the terrible by measuring its boundaries. But since every defect has its corresponding quality, this same instinct secured for the modern age a world of immaculate loveliness in art and undimmed joyousness in poetry. If the wonderland of fancy is eliminated, the monstrous

and unshaped have disappeared. With the grotesque vanishes disproportion. Humanity, conscious of its own emotion, displaces the shadowy people of the legends. We move in a well-ordered world of cheerfulness and beauty, made for man, where symmetry of parts is music. Ariosto's jocund irony is no slight compensation for the imagery of a Northern mythus.

Returning to the *Rappresentazioni*, we are forced to admit that the defect of the Italian fancy is more apparent than its quality, in a species of dramatic art which, being childish, needed some magic spell to reconcile an adult taste to its puerility.[1] They were written at the most prosaic moment of the national development, by men who could not afford to substitute the true Italian poetry of irony and idyllic sensuousness for the ancient religious spirit. The bondage of the middle ages was upon them. They were forced to take the extravagance of the monastic imagination for fact. But they did not really believe; and so the fact was apprehended frigidly, prosaically. Instead of poetry we get rhetoric; instead of marvels, gross incredibilities are forced upon us in the lives of men and women fashioned like the

[1] The greater maturity of the plastic than of the poetic arts in the fifteenth century is apparent when we contrast the *Rappresentazioni* with Masaccio's, Ghirlandajo's, Mantegna's, or Carpaccio's paintings. Art, as I have frequently had to observe, emancipated the human faculties, and humanised the figments of the middle age by investing them with corporeal shape and forms of æsthetic beauty. The deliverance of the Italian genius was thus effected in painting earlier than in poetry, and in those very spheres of religious art where the poets were helpless to attain true freedom. Italian poetry first became free when it turned round and regarded the myths with an amused smile. I do not say that this was absolutely necessary, that an heroic Christian poetry might not have been produced in the fifteenth century by another race. But for the Italians it was necessary.

folk who crowd the streets we know. Another step in the realistic direction would have transformed all these religious myths into *novelle*; and then a new beauty, the beauty of the Decameron and *Novellino*, would have been shed upon them. But it was precisely this step that Castellani and Belcari dared not take, since their purpose remained religious edification. Nay, their instinct led them in the opposite direction. Unable to escape the influence of the *novella*, which was the truest literary form peculiar to Italy in that age, they converted it into a sacred legend and treated it with the same rhetorical and insincere pietism as the stories of the Saints. From S. Barbara to the third-class *Rappresentazioni* the transition is easy.

The interest of this group of stories, as illustrating the psychological conditions of the Italian imagination, is great. Stripped of medieval mystery, reduced to the proportions of a *novella*, but not yet invested with its worldly charm, denuded of the pregnant symbolism or tragic intensity of their originals, these plays reveal the poverty of the fifteenth century, the incapacity of the Florentine genius at that moment to create poetry outside the sphere of figurative art, and in a region where irony and sensuality and natural passion were alike excluded. They might be compared to dead bones awaiting the spirit-breath of mirth and sarcasm to rouse them into life. *Teofilo* is the Italian Faustus.[1] A devil accuses him to the Bishop he is serving. Outcast and dishonoured, he seeks Manovello, a Jewish sorcerer, who takes him

[1] *Sacre Rappr.* ii. 447.

to a cross-way and raises the fiend, Beelzebub. Teofilo abjures Christ, adores the devil, and signs a promise to be Satan's bondsman. In return, Beelzebub despatches a goblin, Farfalletto, to the Bishop, who believes that an angel has come to bid him restore Teofilo to honour. Consequently Teofilo regains his post. But in the midst of his prosperity the renegade is wretched. Stung by conscience, he throws himself upon the mercy of our Lady. She pleads for him with Christ, summons the devil, and wrests from his grasp the parchment given by Teofilo. Poetic justice is satisfied by Manovello's descent to hell. Such is the prosaic form which the Faust legend assumed in Italy. Instead of the lust for power and knowledge which consumed the doctor of Wittenberg, making him exclaim :

> Had I as many souls as there be stars,
> I'd give them all for Mephistophilis !

we have this commonplace story of a bishop's almoner, driven by a vulgar trial of his patience to abjure the faith. The intercession of Mary introduces a farcical element into the piece ; the audience is amused by seeing the devil's contract snatched from him after a jocular altercation with the Queen of Heaven. Our Mephistophilis is either fantastically grotesque, as in the old prose-legend, or tragically saturnine, as in Marlowe's tragedy. The fiend of this Florentine play is a sort of supernatural usurer, who lends at a short date upon exorbitant interest, and is nonsuited for fraud in the supreme court of appeal. To charge the Italian imagination in general with this dwarfing and defining of a legend that had in it such

elements of grandeur, might be scarcely fair. The fault lies more perhaps with Florence of the fifteenth century; yet Florence was the brain of Italy, and if the people there could find no more of salt or savour in a myth like that of Theophilus, this fact gives food for deep reflection to the student of their culture.

In the *Rè Superbo* we have one of those stories which travelled from the far East in the middle ages over the whole of Europe, acquiring a somewhat different form in every country.[1] The proud king in the midst of his prosperity falls sick. He takes a short day's journey to a watering-place, and bathes. By night an angel assumes his shape, dons his royal robes, summons his folk, and fares homeward to his palace. The king, meanwhile, is treated by the innkeeper as an impudent rascal. He begs some rags to cover his nakedness, and arrives in due time at the city he had left the day before. There his servants think him mad; but he obtains an audience with the angel, who reads him a sermon on humility, and then restores him to his throne. In this tale there lay nothing beyond the scope of the Italian imagination. Consequently the treatment is adequate, and the situations copied from real life are really amusing. The play of *Barlaam e Josafat* by Bernardo Pulci is more ambitious.[2] Josafat's father hears from his astrologers that the child will turn Christian. Accordingly he builds a tower, and places his son there, surrounded with all things pleasant to the senses and cheering to the heart of man. His servants receive strict orders that the boy should never leave his prison, lest haply, meeting with old

[1] *Sacre Rappr.* iii. 177. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 163.

age or poverty or sickness, he should think of Christ. On one occasion they neglect this rule. Josafat rides forth and sees a leper and a blind man, and learns that age and death and pain are in store for all. This stirs reflection, and prepares him to receive the message of one Barlaam, who comes disguised as a merchant to the tower. Barlaam offers him a jewel which restores sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and which turns a fool to wisdom. The jewel is the faith of Christ. Josafat is instantly converted and baptised; nor can the persuasions of wise men or the allurements of women overcome his fixed resolve. So firmly rooted is his new faith, so wonderful his eloquence, that he converts his father and the Court, and receives for his great wisdom the crown of his ancestors. Yet an earthly throne savours too much in his eyes of worldly pride. Therefore he renounces it, and lives thenceforth a holy hermit. This legend, it will be perceived, is a dim echo of the wonderful history of Siddârtha, the founder of Buddhism. Beautiful as are the outlines, too beautiful to be spoiled by any telling, Pulci has done his best to draw it from the dream-world of romance into the sphere of prose. At the same time, while depriving it of romance, he has not succeeded in dramatising it. We do not feel the psychological necessity for the changes in any of the characters; the charm of each strange revolution is destroyed by the clumsy preparation of the motives. We are forced to feel that the playwright was working on the lines of a legend he did not understand and could not vitalise. The wonder is that he thought of choosing it and found it ready to his hand.

Few of the *Rappresentazioni* are so interesting as *S. Uliva.*[1] Uliva is no saint of the Catholic calendar, but a daughter of world-old romance. Her legend may be read in the *Gesta Romanorum*, in Philip de Beaumanoir's *Roman de la Mannelline*, in Ser Giovanni's *Pecorone*, in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*, in Grimm's *Handless Maiden*, and in Russian and Servian variations on the same theme. It is in truth the relic of some very ancient myth, used by the poets of all ages for the sake of its lesson of patience in affliction, its pathos of persecuted innocence. The form the tale assumed in Italy is this. Uliva, daughter of the Roman Emperor, Giuliano, is begged in marriage by her own father, who says she has more beautiful hands than any other princess. She cuts her hands off, and Giuliano sends her to Britain to be killed. But her murderers take pity on her, and leave her in a wood alone. There the King of Britain finds her and places her under the protection of his queen. After many misfortunes the Virgin Mary restores her hands, and she is married to the King of Castille. She bears him a son; but by this time she has roused the jealousy and hatred of the queen-mother, who takes the opportunity of the king's absence to poison his mind against her by letters, and shortly after drives her forth with her child. Uliva reaches Rome, and lives there twelve years unknown, till her husband, who has discovered and punished his mother's treason, and has sought his wronged wife sorrowing, at last rejoins her and recognises in her son his heir. The play ends

[1] *Sacre Rappr.* iii. 235. Also edited separately with an introduction by D' Ancona.

with a reconciliation scene between the Emperor, the King, and Uliva, the Pope pronouncing benedictions on the whole party. It will be seen from this brief abstract of the legend that the *Rappresentazione* is a chivalrous *novella* dramatised. Several old pathetic stories have been woven into one, and the heroine has been dignified with the title of saint because of the pity she inspires. Uliva belongs to the sisterhood of Boccaccio's Griselda, Ariosto's Ginevra, and the Queen in our old ballad of Sir Aldingar. The medieval imagination, after creating types of stateliness like Guinivere, of malice like Morgana, of love like Iseult, turned aside and dwelt upon the tender delicacy of a woman, whose whole strength is her beauty, gentleness, and patience; who suffers all things in the spirit of charity; whom the angels love and whom our Lady cherishes; who wins all hearts of men by her goodliness; and who, like Una, passes unscathed through peril and persecution until at last her joy is perfected by the fruition of her lawful love. It was precisely this element of romance that touched the Italian fancy; and the playwright of *S. Uliva* has shown considerable skill in his treatment of it. Piteous details are accumulated with remorseless pertinacity upon the head of the unfortunate Uliva, in order to increase the pathos of her situation. There is no mitigation of her hardships except in her own innocence, and in the loving compassion wrung by her beauty from her rude tormentors. This want of relief, together with the brusque passage from one incident to another, betrays a lack of dramatic art. But the poet, whoever he was, succeeded in sustaining the ideal of purity and beauty

he conceived. He shows how all Uliva's sufferings as well as her good fortune were due to the passions her beauty inspired, and how it was her purity that held her harmless to the end.

Stella is the same story slightly altered, with a somewhat different cast of characters and an evil-hearted step-mother in the place of the malignant queen.[1] If we compare both fables with Grimm's version of the 'Handless Maiden,' the superiority of the Northern conception cannot fail to strike us. The Italian *novella*, though written for the people, exhibits the external pomp and grandeur of royalty. All its motives are drawn from the clash of human passions. Yet these are hidden beneath a superincumbent mass of trivialities. The German tale has a background of spiritual mystery—good and evil powers striving for the possession of a blameless soul. When the husband, who has been deceived by feminine malice, takes his long journey without food as a penitent to find his injured wife, how far deeper is the pathos and the poetry of the situation than the Italian apparatus of couriers with letter-bags, chancellors, tournaments, and royal progresses undertaken with a vast parade, can compass! The Northern fancy, stimulated by the simple beauty of the situation, confines itself to the passionate experience of the heart and soul. The Florentine playwright adheres to the material facts of life, and takes a childish pleasure in passing the splendours of kings and princes in review. By this method he vulgarises the legend he handles.

[1] *Sacre Rappr.* iii. 319.

Beneath his touch it ceases to be holy ground. The enchantment of the myth has evanesced.

Rosana is simply the story of *Floire et Blancheflcur*, which Boccaccio had already worked into his *Filocopo*.[1] Austero, King of Rome, goes with his wife on pilgrimage to Holy Land. He falls into the hands of the King of Cesaria, and is slain with all his folk, except the queen. She is taken captive to Cesaria, where she gives birth to Rosana on the same day that Ulimeno is born to her master. When Ulimeno grows up, he loves the daughter of his father's slave. His parents seek to cure this passion by sending him to France, and at the same time sell Rosana to some merchants, who convey her to the Sultan's harem. Ulimeno returns to Cesaria in deep distress, and vows that he will never rest till he has regained his love. After a proper number of adventures, he finds Rosana in the seraglio, where, notwithstanding the Sultan's admiration of her beauty, she has preserved her virginity. They are married, and Ulimeno is converted, with his realm, to Christianity. The prettiest parts of this play are the scenes in the seraglio, where Rosana refuses comfort from the Sultan's women, and the contrivances devised by Ulimeno to get speech with her. Except that Rosana and her parents are Christian and that the saints protect her, there is nothing to justify the title of *Sacra Rappresentazione.* It is a love-romance, like Shakspere's *Pericles.*

Another *novella* of less poetic interest is dramatised in *Agnolo Ebreo.*[2] Agnolo, the Jew, has a Christian wife, who persuades him instead of putting out his money at usury to lend it to Christ by giving

[1] *Sacre Rappr.* iii. 362. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 485.

it away in alms. Having thus cast his bread upon the waters, he recovers it again after not many days by picking up money in the streets and finding a jewel in a fish's belly. He is baptised, because he sees clearly that the God of the Christians can make him rich. Only its tedious solemnity prevents this play from being a farce.

Three *Rappresentazioni* are written upon incidents of pilgrimage to the shrine of S. James of Compostella —Il Santo Barone, as he is always called. The first of these is entitled *Rappresentazione di un Pellegrino*.[1] It tells the tale of a certain Guglielmo who vowed the journey to Compostella on his sick bed. Upon the road he meets with a fiend in the disguise of S. James, who persuades him to commit suicide. No sooner is he dead, than the devil grasps his soul, as may be seen in Lorenzetti's fresco of the Campo Santo, and makes away with it toward hell. S. James stops him, and a voluble altercation takes place between them, at the end of which the soul, who keeps crying *misericordia* at intervals, is rescued and restored to its body. Then Guglielmo completes his vow, and returns joyfully to his wife. *I due Pellegrini* is more complex.[2] Arrigo Coletta leaves his wife and son at Rome; Constantino Constante leaves his wife and three sons at Genoa; and both set forth to Compostella. On the way they meet and make friends; but the Genoese dies before they have got far upon their journey. His Roman friend carries the dead body to Compostella, where S. James restores it to life, and both return in safety to their homes. After sojourning some time in

[1] *Sacre Rappr.* iii. 416. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 439.

Rome, Arrigo falls sick of leprosy, and has to go forth and wander up and down the earth. Chance brings him to the house of the Genoese who had received such benefits from him upon their pilgrimage. They consult doctors and wise men together, who assure them that no cure can be wrought unless the leper bathe from head to foot in the blood of virgins. This determines Constantino to sacrifice all that he holds dearest in the world. He kills his three sons, and prepares a bath of their blood, which restores his old benefactor to health. But the Saint of Compostella has still his eye upon his servants. A miracle brings the three boys back to life. They are found with golden apples in their hands, and the play ends with a general thanksgiving. The prosy bluntness with which the incidents of this strange story are treated as matter of fact, is scarcely less remarkable than the immorality which substitutes mere thaumaturgy for the finer instincts of humanity. The exaggerated generosity of Constantino might be paralleled from hundreds of *novelle*. This one virtue seems to have had extraordinary fascination for the Italians. *I tre Pellegrini* is based upon a legend of medieval celebrity, versified by Southey in his 'Pilgrimage to Compostella.'[1] A father, a mother, and a son of great personal beauty set forth together for the shrine of S. Iago. On the road they put up at an inn, where Falconetta, the host's daughter, falls in love with the boy and tempts him. Thwarted in her will, she vows to ruin him; and for this purpose, puts a silver cup into his travelling bag. In the morning the pilgrims are overtaken by the

[1] *Sacre Rappr.* iii. 466.

police, who find the cup and hang the beautiful young man. The parents complete their vow, and on the way back discover their son upon the gallows alive and well. Falconetta is burned, and her parents are hanged—the old host remarking, not without humour, that, though he was innocent of this crime, he had murdered enough people in his day to have deserved his fate. The style of this play merits more praise than can be bestowed on the *Rappresentazioni* in general. Falconetta is a real theatrical character, and the bustle of the inn on the arrival of the guests is executed with dramatic vigour.

In their *Sacre Rappresentazioni* the Florentines advanced to the very verge of the true drama. After adapting the Miracle-plays of medieval orthodoxy to their stage, they versified the Legends of the Saints, and went so far as to dramatise novels of a purely secular character. The *Figliuol Prodigo* and the farce appended to the *Pellegrino* contain the germs of vernacular comedy. S. Maddalena is a complete character. S. Uliva is delicately sketched and well sustained. The situation at the opening of the *Tre Pellegrini* is worked out with real artistic skill. Lastly, in the *Esaltazione della Croce* a regular five-act tragedy was attempted.

From the oratories of the Compagnie and the parlours of the convents this peculiar form of art was extended to the Courts and public theatres. Poliziano composed a *Rappresentazione* on the classical fable of Orpheus, and Niccolò da Correggio another on the myth of Cephalus and Procris.[1] Other attempts to

[1] The date of the former is probably 1472, of the latter 1486.

secularise the religious drama followed, until, in 1521, Francesco Mantovano put the contemporary history of the French General Lautrec upon the boards.

Still the fact remains that the *Sacre Rappresentazioni* did not lead to the production of a national Italian theatre. If we turn to the history of our Elizabethan stage, we shall find that, after the age of the Miracles and Moralities had passed, a new and independent work of art, emanating from the creative genius of Marlowe and Shakspere, put England in the possession of that great rarity, a Drama commensurate with the whole life of the nation at one of its most brilliant epochs. To this accomplishment of the dramatic art the Italians never attained. The causes of their failure will form the subject of a separate enquiry when we come to consider the new direction taken by the playwrights at the Courts of Ferrara and Rome.

As an apology for the space here devoted to the analysis of plays childish in their subject-matter, prosaic in their treatment, and fruitless of results, it may be urged that in the *Sacre Rappresentazioni* better than elsewhere we can study the limitations of the popular Italian genius at the moment when the junction was effected between humanism and the spirit of the people.

CHAPTER VI.

LORENZO DE' MEDICI AND POLIZIANO.

Period from 1470 to 1530—Methods of treating it—By Chronology—By Places—By Subjects—Renascence of Italian—At Florence, Ferrara, Naples—The New Italy—Forty Years of Peace—Lorenzo de' Medici—His Admiration for and Judgment of Italian Poetry—His Privileges as a Patron—His *Rime*—The Death of Simonetta—Lucrezia Donati—Lorenzo's Descriptive Power—The *Selve*—The *Ambra*—*La Nencia*—*I Beoni*—His Sacred Poems—Carnival and Dance Songs—Carri and Trionfi—Savonarola—The Masque of Penitence—Leo X. in Florence, 1513—Pageant of the Golden Age—Angelo Poliziano—His Place in Italian Literature—*Le Stanze*—Treatment of the Octave Stanza—Court Poetry—Mechanism and Adornment—The *Orfeo*—Orpheus, the Ideal of the Cinque Cento—Its Dramatic Qualities—Chorus of Mænads—Poliziano's Love Poems—*Rispetti*—Florentine Love—La Bella Simonetta—Study and Country Life.

In dealing with the mass of Italian literature between the dates 1470 and 1530, several methods suggest themselves, each of which offers certain advantages, while none is wholly satisfactory. In the *first* place we might adopt a chronological division, and arrange the chief authors of whom we have to treat, by periods. Lorenzo de' Medici, Poliziano, Luigi Pulci, Boiardo, and Sannazzaro would be the leading names in the first group. In the second we should place Ariosto, Machiavelli, Guicciardini and the minor historians of Florence. Bembo would lead a third class, including Castiglione, La Casa, and the Petrarchistic poets of the Academies. A fourth would be headed by Pietro

Aretino, and would embrace the burlesque writers and minor critical prosaists of the decadence. The advantage of this method is that it corresponds to a certain regular progression in the evolution of Italian genius during that brief space of brilliant activity. Yet the chronological stages are not sufficiently well marked to justify its exclusive adoption. The first group is separated from the rest by a real interval, since the men who compose it died, with one exception, before the close of the fifteenth century, about the year of Charles VIII.'s entrance into Italy.[1] But the authors of the second, third, and fourth groups lived almost contemporaneously, covering the whole period of Italy's greatest literary glory and deepest national discomfiture, and witnessing the final extinction of her liberty in the settlement effected by the policy of Charles V.[2] Nor, again, can we trace in the several phases of literature they represent, so clear a process of expansion as may be detected in the successive stages of artistic or humanistic development. When the work effected by the first group was accomplished, both the language and the literature of Italy became in a true sense national, and the cultivated classes of all districts, trained in the common discipline of humanistic studies, set themselves with one accord and simultaneously to the task of polishing the mother tongue. This fact in the history of Italian literature

[1] Lorenzo de' Medici, b. 1448, d. 1492. Poliziano b. 1454, d. 1494. Luigi Pulci, b. 1432, d. about 1487. Boiardo, b. about 1434, d. 1494. Sannazzaro, b. 1458, d. 1530.

[2] Machiavelli, b. 1469, d. 1527. Ariosto, b. 1474, d. 1533. Guicciardini, b. 1482, d. 1540. Bembo, b. 1470, d. 1547. Castiglione, b. 1478, d. 1529. La Casa, b. 1503, d. 1556. Pietro Aretino, b. 1492, d. 1557.

suggests a *second* method of classification. We might take the three chief centres of renascence at the close of the fifteenth century—Florence, Ferrara, Naples—and show how the local characteristics of these cities affected their great writers. Rome during the pontificate of Leo X.; Urbino under the rule of Guidubaldo Montefeltre; Milan in the days of the last Sforzas; Venice at the epoch of Aldo's settlement; might next be chosen to illustrate the subsequent growth of Italian culture, when it ceased to be Tuscan, Neapolitan, and Ferrarese. Yet though this local method of arrangement offers many advantages, and has the grand merit of fixing the attention upon one important feature of intellectual life in Italy—its many-sidedness and diversity, due to the specific qualities of cities vying with each other in a common exercise of energy—still it would not do for the historian of Italian culture at one of its most brilliant moments to accentuate minor differences, when it ought to be his object to portray the genius of the people as a whole. In a word, this classification has the same defect as the treatment of the arts by Schools.[1] Moreover, it cannot fail to lead to repetition and confusion; for though the work we have to analyse was carried on in several provinces, yet each Court and each city produced material of the same general character. Novels, for example, were written at Florence as well as Milan. Rome saw the first representation of comedies no less than Ferrara. The romantic epic was not confined to the Court of the Estensi, nor dissertations on the gentle life to that of Urbino. We are led by the

[1] See *Fine Arts*, p. 183.

foregoing considerations to yet a *third* method of arrangement. Would it not be scientific to divide the literature of the Renaissance into its chief branches, and to treat of the romantic epic, the *novella*, the stage, the idyll, lyric verse, essays in prose, histories, and so forth, under separate chapters? Undoubtedly there is much to say for such a treatment of the subject. Yet when we consider that it necessitates our bringing the same authors under review in several successive sections, confuses chronology, and effaces local distinctions, it will be seen that to follow this system exclusively would be unwise. It is too strictly analytical for our purpose. That purpose is to draw a portrait of the Italian spirit as expressed in the vernacular literature of about seventy years of exceptional splendour; and perhaps it will be conceded by the student that instinct, conscious of the end in view, conscious also of these several methods, but unwilling to be hampered by any one of them too rigorously followed out, will be a safer guide than formal accuracy.

I therefore propose in the remaining chapters of this book to adopt a mixed method, partaking of the chronological in so far as I shall attempt to show a certain process of evolution from the renascence led by Lorenzo de' Medici to the decadence typified in Pietro Aretino, insisting upon local peculiarities where it can be clearly proved that these contributed an important element to the total result, and relying on the classification by subjects for bringing scattered details under general consideration. Five men of the highest eminence mark stages in the history we have to review. These are Poliziano, Ariosto and Machi-

avelli, Bembo, and Pietro Aretino. Chronologically, they represent four moments of development—the initial, the consummate, the academical, and the decadent. But if we discard chronology and regard their intellectual qualities alone, we might reduce them to three. Merging Poliziano and Bembo in Ariosto, retaining Machiavelli and Pietro Aretino, we obtain the three prominent phases of Renaissance culture in Italy—firstly, serene, self-satisfied, triumphant art, glorying in the beauty of form for form's sake, and aiming at perfection in style of sunny and delightful loveliness; secondly, profound scientific analysis, taking society for its object, dissecting human history and institutions without prejudice or prepossession, unqualified by religious or ethical principles, pushing its logical method to the utmost verge of audacity, and startling the world with terror by the results of its materialistic philosophy; thirdly, moral corruption unabashed and unrestrained, destitute of shame because devoid of conscience, boldly asserting itself and claiming the right to rule society with cynical effrontery. Round Ariosto are grouped the romantic and idyllic poets, the novelists and comic playwrights, all the tribe of joyous merry-makers, who translated into prose and verse the beauty found in painting of the golden age. With Machiavelli march the historians and political philosophers, the school of Pomponazzi and the materialistic analysts, who led the way for a new birth of science in the Baconian speculations of the Cosentine academy. Aretino is the coryphæus of a multitude of scribes and courtiers, literary gladiators, burlesque authors of obscene *Capitoli*, men of evil

character, who used the pen for poniard, and were the fit successors of invective-writers.

If we turn from men to cities, and seek to define the parts played by the several communities in this work of creating an Italian literature, we shall find that Florence fixes the standard of language, and dominates the nation by the fame of her three poets of the fourteenth century. Florence, moreover, gives birth to Machiavelli, Guicciardini, and the political theorists who form a group around them. Florentine wit and humour lend a certain pungency to all the products of the golden age. Naples adds the luxury of southern colour, felt in Sannazzaro's waxen paragraphs and Pontano's voluptuous hendecasyllables. Ferrara develops the chivalrous elements of the romantic epic, shelters Ariosto, and produces the pastoral drama, that eminently characteristic product of the late Renaissance. Milan is the home of Bandello, who takes the first rank among the novelists and leads a school of Lombard writers in that style. Rome does little for the general culture of the nation, except that in the age of Leo the Papal Court formed a centre for studious men of all classes and qualities. Her place in literature is therefore analogous to that she occupies in art and scholarship.[1] Aretino chooses the city of the lagoons for his retreat, not without a certain propriety; for Venice had become the Paris of the sixteenth century, and here the press was more active than elsewhere in Italy. His instinct led the master of lampoon, the prince of pamphleteers, to the city which combined the utmost licence of printing with

[1] See *Revival of Learning*, pp. 215 *et seq.*; *Fine Arts*, pp. 183 *et seq.*

the most highly developed immorality of manners. Thus, seen from many points of view and approached with different objects of study, men, places, and matter alike furnish their own pivots for treatment. Italy, unlike England and France, has no political and intellectual metropolis, no London and no Paris, where the historian may take his stand securely to survey the manifold activities of the race as from a natural centre. He must be content to shift his ground and vary his analytic method, keeping steadily in mind those factors which by their interaction and combination determine the phenomena he has in view.

We are now at length upon the threshold of the true Renaissance. The division between popular literature and humanistic culture is about to end. Classic form, appropriated by the scholars, will be given to the prose and poetry of the Italian language. The fusion, divined and attempted, rather than accomplished by Alberti, will be achieved. Men as great as Machiavelli and Ariosto henceforth need not preface their *cose volgari* with apologies. The new literature is no longer Tuscan, but Italian—national in the widest and deepest sense of the word, when Venetian Bembo, Neapolitan Sannazzaro, Ariosto from Reggio, Boiardo Count of Scandiano, Castiglione the Mantuan and Tasso the Bergamasque vie with Tuscan Pulci and Poliziano, Machiavelli and Guicciardini, in the creation of the golden age.

The renascence of Italian took place almost simultaneously in three centres: at Florence under the protection of the Medici, at Ferrara in the castle of the Estensi, and at Naples in the Aragonese Court.

Rome from the pontificate of Innocent VIII. to that of Leo X. was almost dumb and deaf to literature. Venice waited till the period of the press. Milan produced nothing. It was but gradually that the wave of national culture reached the minor states. The three cities to which Italy owed the resurrection of her genius were ruled by princes, and the new literature felt the influence of Courts from the commencement. Indeed, the whole conditions of Italy had been altered since the death of Boccaccio in 1375. The middle ages had been swept away. Of their modes of thought, religious beliefs, political ideals, scholastic theories, scarcely a vestige remained. Among the cities which had won or kept their independence during the fourteenth century, only one remained free from a master's yoke; and even Venice, though she showed no outward signs of decadence, had reached the utmost verge of her development. The citizens who had fought the battles of the Communes round their banners and their sacred cars, were now quiet burghers, paying captains of adventure to wage mimic warfare with political or commercial rivals in neighbouring States. A class of professional diplomatists corresponding to these mercenary war-contractors had arisen, selected from the ranks of the scholars for their rhetorical gifts and command of Latin style. The humanists themselves constituted a new and powerful body, a nation within the nation, separated from its higher social and political interests, selfish, restless, greedy for celebrity, nomadic, disengaged from local ties, conscious of their strength, and swaying with the vast prestige of learning in that age

the intellectual destinies of the race. Insolent and ambitious in all that concerned their literary pretensions, these men were servile in their private life. They gained their daily bread by flatteries and menaces, hanging about the Courts of petty despots, whose liberality they paid with adulation or quickened with the threat of infamy in libels. At the same time the humanists, steeped in the best and worst that could be extracted from the classics, confounding the dross of Greek and Roman literature with its precious metal in their indiscriminate worship of antiquity, and debarred through want of criticism from assimilating the noblest spirit of the pagan culture, had created a new mental atmosphere. The work they accomplished for Italy, though mixed in quality, had two undeniable merits. Not only had they restored the heritage of the past and broken down the barrier between the ancient and the modern world, bringing back the human consciousness from the torpor of the middle ages to a keen and vivid sense of its own unity; but they so penetrated and imbued each portion of the Italian nation with their enthusiasm, that, intellectually at least, the nation was now one and ready for a simultaneous progress on the path of culture.[1]

It so happened that at this very moment, when the unity of Italy in art and scholarship had been achieved, external quiet succeeded to the discords of three centuries. The ancient party-cries of Emperor and Church, of Guelf and Ghibelline, of noble and

[1] It is right to say here that considerable portions of Southern Italy, the Marches of Ancona and Romagna, Piedmont and Liguria, remained outside the Renaissance movement at this period.

burgher, of German and Latin ingredients within the body politic had gradually ceased and been forgotten. The Italic element, deriving its instincts from Roman civilisation, triumphed over the alien and the feudal; and though this victory was attended with the decay of the Communes that had striven to achieve it, yet the final outcome was a certain homogeneity of conditions in all the great centres of national life. Italy became a net-work of cultivated democracies, ruled by tyrants of different degrees. The middle of the fifteenth century witnessed the commencement of that halcyon period of forty years' tranquillity, destined to be broken by the descent of Charles VIII., in 1494, upon which Machiavelli and Guicciardini from amid the tempests of the next half century looked back with eyes of wonder and of envy. Constantinople fell, and the undoubted primacy of the civilised races came to the Italians. Lorenzo de' Medici was regarded as the man who, by his political ability and firm grasp of the requisite conditions for maintaining peace in the peninsula, had established and secured the equilibrium between mutually jealous and antagonistic States. Whether the merit of that repose, so fruitful of results in art and literature for the Italians, was really due to Lorenzo's sagacity, or whether the shifting forces of the nation had become stationary for a season by the operation of circumstances, may fairly be questioned. Yet there is no doubt that the unprecedented prosperity of the people coincided with his administration of Florence, and ended when he ceased to guide the commonwealth. It was at any rate a singular good fortune that connected the name

of this extraordinary man with the high-tide of material prosperity in Italy and with the resurrection of her national literature.

The figure of Lorenzo de' Medici has more than once already crossed the stage of this history.[1] Whether dealing with the political conditions, or the scholarship, or the fine arts of the Renaissance, it is impossible to omit his name. There is therefore now no need to sketch his character or to enquire into the incidents of his Florentine administration. It will suffice to remind the readers of this book that he finally succeeded in so clinching the power of the Casa Medici that no subsequent revolutions were able to destroy it. The part he played as a patron of artists and scholars, and as a writer of Italian, was subordinate to his political activity in circumstances of peculiar difficulty. While controlling the turbulent democracy of Florence and gaining recognition for his tyranny from jealous princes, he still contrived to lead his age in every branch of culture, deserving the magnificent eulogium of Poliziano, who sang of him in the *Nutricia*[2]:

> Tu vero æternam, per avi vestigia Cosmi
> Perque patris (quis enim pietate insignior illo?),
> Ad famam eluctans, cujus securus ad umbram
> Fulmina bellorum ridens procul aspicit Arnus,
> Mæoniæ caput, o Laurens, quem plena senatu
> Curia quemque gravi populus stupet ore loquentem,
> Si fas est, tua nunc humili patere otia cantu
> Secessusque sacros avidas me ferre sub auras.
> Namque, importunas mulcentem pectine curas,
> Umbrosæ recolo te quondam vallis in antrum

[1] See *Age of the Despots*, pp. 209, 460, 475; *Revival of Learning*, pp. 314–323; *Fine Arts*, pp. 263, 387. See also *Sketches and Studies in Italy*, Article on Florence and the Medici.

[2] *Op. Lat.* p. 423.

Monticolam traxisse deam : vidi ipse corollas
Nexantem, numerosque tuos prona aure bibentem. . . .
Quodque alii studiumque vocant durumque laborem,
Hìc tibi ludus erit : fessus civilibus actis,
Huc is emeritas acuens ad carmina vires.
Felix ingenio ! felix cui pectore tantas
Instaurare vices, cui fas tam magna capaci
Alternare animo, et varias ita nectere curas !

Lorenzo de' Medici was the last apologist for the mother speech, as he was the first and chief inaugurator of the age when such apologies were no longer to be needed. He took a line somewhat different from Alberti's in his defence of Italian, proving not merely its utility but boldly declaring its equality with the classic languages. We possess a short essay of his, written with this purpose, where he bestows due praise on Dante, Boccaccio and Guido Cavalcanti, and affirms in the teeth of the humanists that Petrarch wrote better love-poems than Ovid, Tibullus, Catullus or Propertius.[1] Again, in his epistle to Federigo of Aragon, sent with a MS. volume containing a collection of early Tuscan poetry, he passes acute and sympathetic judgments on the lyrists from Guittone of Arezzo to Cino da Pistoja, proving that he had studied their works to good purpose and had formed a correct opinion of the origins of Italian literature.[2] Lorenzo does not write like a man ashamed of the vernacular or forced to use it because he can command no better. He is sure of the justice of his cause, and determined by precept and example and by the prestige of his princely rank to bring the literature he loves into repute again.

[1] *Poesie di Lorenzo de' Medici* (Firenze, Barbéra, 1859), pp. 10–19.

[2] *Ibid.* pp. 24–34. Notice especially the verdict on Cino and Dante, p 33.

No one could have been better fitted for the task. Unlike Alberti, Lorenzo was a Florentine of the Florentines, Tuscan to the backbone, imbued with the spirit of his city, a passionate lover of her customs and pastimes, a complete master of her vernacular. His education, though it fitted him for Platonic discussions with Ficino and rendered him an amateur of humanistic culture, had failed to make a pedant of him. Much as he appreciated the classics, he preferred his Tuscan poets; and what he learned at school, he brought to bear upon the study of the native literature. Consequently his style is always idiomatic; whether he seeks the elevation of grave diction or reproduces the talk of the streets, he uses language like a man who has habitually spoken the words which he commits to paper. His brain was vigorous, and his critical faculty acute. He lived, moreover, in close sympathy with his age, never rising above it, but accurately representing its main tendencies. At the same time he was sufficiently a poet to delight a generation that had seen no great writer of verse since Boccaccio. Though his work is in no sense absolutely first rate, he wrote nothing that a man of ability might not have been pleased to own.

Lorenzo's first essays in poetry were sonnets and *canzoni* in the style of the *trecento*. It is a mistake to classify him, as some historians of literature have done, with the deliberate imitators of Petrarch, or to judge his work by its deflection from the Petrarchistic standard of pure style. His youthful lyrics show the appreciative study of Dante and Guido Cavalcanti no less than of the poet of Vaucluse; and though they affect the conventional melancholy of the Petrarchistic

mannerism, they owe their force to the strong objective spirit of the fifteenth century. Lorenzo's originality consists in the fusion he effected between the form of the love-lyric handed down from Petrarch and the realistic genius of the age of Ghirlandajo. This is especially noticeable in the sonnets that describe the beauties of the country. They are not penetrated with emotion permeating and blurring the impressions made by natural objects on the poet's mind. His landscapes are not hazy with the atmosphere, now luminous, now sombre, of a lover's varying mood. On the contrary, every object is defined and classified; and the lady sits like a beautiful figure in a garden, painted with no less loving care in all its details than herself.[1] These pictures, very delicate in their minute and truthful touches, affect our fancy like a panel of Benozzo Gozzoli, who omits no circumstance of the scene he undertakes to reproduce, crowds it with incidents and bestows the same attention upon the principal subjects and the accessories. The central emotion of Lorenzo's verse is scarcely love, but delight in the country—the Florentine's enjoyment of the villa, with its woods and rivulets, the pines upon the hillsides, the song-birds, and the pleasures of the chase.

The following sonnet might be chosen as a fair specimen of the new manner introduced into literature by Lorenzo. Its classical colouring, deeply felt and yet somewhat frigid, has the true stamp of the *quattrocento*[2]:

[1] Read for instance No. xii. in the edition above cited, 'Vidi madonna sopra un fresco rio;' No. xviii. 'Con passi sparti,' etc.; No. xlvii., 'Belle fresche e purpuree viole.'

[2] *Ibid.* p 97.

Leave thy belovèd isle, thou Cyprian queen ;
Leave thine enchanted realm so delicate,
Goddess of love ! Come where the rivulet
Bathes the short turf and blades of tenderest green !
Come to these shades, these airs that stir the screen
Of whispering branches and their murmurs set
To Philomel's enamoured canzonet :
Choose this for thine own land, thy loved demesne !
And if thou com'st by these clear rills to reign,
Bring thy dear son, thy darling son, with thee ;
For there be none that own his empire here.
From Dian steal the vestals of her train,
Who roam the woods at will, from danger free,
And know not Love, nor his dread anger fear.

That Lorenzo was incapable of loving as Dante or Petrarch or even Boccaccio loved, is obvious in every verse he wrote. The spirit in him neither triumphs over the flesh nor struggles with it, nor yet submits a willing and intoxicated victim. It remains apart and cold, playing with fancies, curiously surveying the carnival of lusts that hold their revel in the breast whereof it is the lord. Under these conditions he could take the wife his mother found for him at Rome, and record the fact in his diary[1]; he could while away his leisure with venal beauties or country girls at his villas; but of love in the poet's sense he had no knowledge. It is true that, nurtured as he was in the traditions of fourteenth-century verse, he thought it necessary to establish a titular mistress of his heart. The account he gives of this proceeding in a commentary on his own sonnets, composed after the model of the *Vita Nuova*, is one of his best pieces of writing. He describes the day when the beautiful Simonetta

[1] 'Tolsi donna . . . ovvero mi fu data,' from the *Ricordi* printed in the Appendix to Roscoe's *Life*.

Cattaneo, his brother Giuliano's lady, was carried to her grave with face uncovered, lying beneath the sunlight on her open bier. All Florence was touched to tears by the sight, and the poets poured forth elegies. The month was April, and the young earth seemed to have put on her robe of flowers only to make the pathos of that death more poignant. Then, says Lorenzo: 'Night came; and I with a friend most dear to me went communing about the loss we all had suffered. While we spoke, the air being exceedingly serene, we turned our eyes to a star of surpassing brightness, which toward the west shone forth with such lustre as not only to conquer all the other stars, but even to cast a shadow from the objects that intercepted its light. We marvelled at it a while; and then, turning to my friend, I said: "There is no need for wonder, since the soul of that most gentle lady has either been transformed into yon new star or has joined herself to it. And if this be so, that splendour of the star is nowise to be wondered at; and even as her beauty in life was of great solace to our eyes, so now let us comfort ourselves at the present moment with the sight of so much brilliance. And if our eyes be weak and frail to bear such brightness, pray we to the god, that is to her deity, to give them virtue, in order that without injury unto our sight we may awhile contemplate it." . . . Then, forasmuch as it appeared to me that this colloquy furnished good material for a sonnet, I left my friend and composed the following verses, in which I speak about the star aforesaid:

O lucid star, that with transcendent light
Quenchest of all those neighbouring stars the gleam,

Why thus beyond thine usage dost thou stream,
Why art thou fain with Phoebus still to fight?
Haply those beauteous eyes, which from our sight
Death stole, who now doth vaunt himself supreme,
Thou hast assumed: clad with their glorious beam,
Well may'st thou claim the sun-god's chariot bright.
Listen, new star, new regent of the day,
Who with unwonted radiance gilds our heaven,
O listen, goddess, to the prayers we pray!
Let so much splendour from thy sphere be riven
That to these eyes, which fain would weep alway,
Unblinded, thy glad sight may yet be given!

From that moment Lorenzo began to write poems. He wandered alone and meditated on the sunflower, playing delightfully unto himself with thoughts of Love and Death. Yet his heart was empty; and like Augustine or Alastor, he could say: 'nondum amabam, sed amare amabam, quærebam quod amarem amans amare.' When a young man is in this mood it is not long before he finds an object for his adoration. Lorenzo went one day in the same spring with friends to a house of feasting, where he met with a lady lovelier in his eyes even than La Simonetta. After the fashion of his age, he describes her physical and mental perfections with a minuteness which need not be enforced upon a modern reader.[1] Suffice it to say that Lucrezia Donati—such was the lady's name—supplied Lorenzo with exactly what he had been seeking, an object for his literary exercises. The *Sonetti*, *Canzoni*, and *Selve d' Amore* were the fruits of this first passion.

Though Lorenzo was neither a poet nor a lover after the stamp of Dante, these juvenile verses and the

[1] 'Innamoramento,' *Poesie*, pp. 58-62. Compare 'Selve d' Amore,' *ib.* pp. 172-174.

prose with which he prefaced them, show him in a light that cannot fail to interest those who only know the statesman and the literary cynic of his later years. There is sincere fervour of romantic feeling in the picture of the evening after Simonetta's funeral, even though the analytical temper of the poet's mind is revealed in his exact description of the shadow cast by the planet he was watching. The first meeting with Lucrezia, again, is prettily described in these stanzas of the *Selve*:

What time the chain was forged which then I bore,
Air, earth, and heavens were linked in one delight;
The air was never so serene before,
The sun ne'er shed such pure and tranquil light;
Young leaves and flowers upon the grassy floor
Gladdened the earth where ran a streamlet bright,
While Venus in her father's bosom lay
And smiled from heaven upon the spot that day.

She from her brows divine and amorous breast
Took with both hands roses of many a hue,
And showered them through the heavens that slept in rest,
Covering my lady with their gracious dew;
Jove, full of gladness, on that day released
The ears of men, that they might hear the true
Echoes of melody and dance divine,
Which fell from heaven in songs and sounds benign.

Fair women to that music moved their feet,
Inflamed with gentle fire by Love's breath fanned:
Behold yon lover with his lady sweet—
Her hand long yearned for clasped in his loved hand;
Their sighs, their looks, which pangs of longing cheat;
Brief words that none but they can understand;
The flowers that she lets fall, resumed and pressed,
With kisses covered, to his head or breast.

Amid so many pleasant things and fair,
My loveliest lady with surpassing grace
Eclipsed and crowned all beauties that were there;
Her robe was white and delicate as lace;

And still her eyes, with silent speech and rare,
Talked to the heart, leaving the lips at peace :
Come to me, come, dear heart of mine, she said,
Here shall thy long desires at rest be laid.

The impression of these verses is hardly marred by the prosy catalogue of Lucrezia's beauties furnished in the *Innamoramento.* Lorenzo was an analyst. He could not escape from that quality so useful to the observer, so fatal to artists, if they cannot recompose the data furnished by observation in a new subjective synthesis. When we compare his description of the Age of Gold in the *Selve,*[1] justly celebrated for its brilliancy and wealth of detail, with the shorter passage from Poliziano's *Stanze,* we measure the distance between intelligent study of nature and the imagination which unifies and gives new form of life to every detail. The same end may be more briefly attained by a comparison of this passage about roses from Lorenzo's *Corinto* with a musical *Ballata* of Poliziano[2] :

Into a little close of mine I went
One morning, when the sun with his fresh light
Was rising all refulgent and unshent.
Rose-trees are planted there in order bright,
Whereto I turned charmed eyes, and long did stay
Taking my fill of that new-found delight.
Red and white roses bloomed upon the spray ;
One opened, leaf by leaf, to greet the morn,
Shyly at first, then in sweet disarray ;
Another, yet a youngling, newly born,
Scarce struggled from the bud, and there were some
Whose petals closed them from the air forlorn ;
Another fell, and showered the grass with bloom ;
Thus I beheld the roses dawn and die,
And one short hour their loveliness consume.

[1] *Poesie,* pp 206-213. [2] *Ibid.* p. 236.

But while I watched those languid petals lie
  Colourless on cold earth, I could but think
  How vain a thing is youthful bravery.
Trees have their time to bloom on winter's brink;
  Then the rathe blossoms wither in an hour,
  When the brief days of spring toward summer sink;
The fruit, as yet unformed, is tart and sour;
  Little by little it grows large, and weighs
  The strong boughs down with slow persistent power;
Nor without peril can the branches raise
  Their burden; now they stagger 'neath the weight
  Still growing, and are bent above the ways;
Soon autumn comes, and the ripe ruddy freight
  Is gathered: the glad season will not stay;
  Flowers, fruits, and leaves are now all desolate.
Pluck the rose, therefore, maiden, while 'tis May!

That is good. It is the best kind of poetry within Lorenzo's grasp. But here is Poliziano's dance-song:

I went a-roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

Violets and lilies grew on every side
  Mid the green grass, and young flowers wonderful,
Golden and white and red and azure-eyed;
  Toward which I stretched my hands, eager to pull
  Plenty to make my fair curls beautiful,
To crown my rippling curls with garlands gay.

I went a-roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

But when my lap was full of flowers I spied
  Roses at last, roses of every hue;
Therefore I ran to pluck their ruddy pride,
  Because their perfume was so sweet and true
  That all my soul went forth with pleasure new,
With yearning and desire too soft to say.

I went a-roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

I gazed and gazed. Hard task it were to tell
  How lovely were the roses in that hour:

One was but peeping from her verdant shell,
And some were faded, some were scarce in flower.
Then Love said: Go, pluck from the blooming bower
Those that thou seest ripe upon the spray.

I went a-roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

For when the full rose quits her tender sheath,
When she is sweetest and most fair to see,
Then is the time to place her in thy wreath,
Before her beauty and her freshness flee.
Gather ye therefore roses with great glee,
Sweet girls, or ere their perfume pass away.

I went a-roaming, maidens, one bright day,
In a green garden in mid month of May.

Both in this *Ballata* and also in the stanzas on the Age of Gold, it might almost seem as though Poliziano had rewritten Lorenzo's exercise with a view to showing the world the difference between true poetry and what is only very like it.

The *Selve d' Amore* and the *Corinto* belong to Lorenzo's early manner, when his heart was yet fresh and statecraft had not made him cynical. The latter is a musical eclogue in *terza rima*; the former a discursive love-poem, with allegorical episodes, in octave stanzas. Up to the date of the *Selve* the *ottava rima* had, so far as I know, been only used for semi-epical poems and short love-songs. Lorenzo proved his originality by suiting it to a style of composition which aimed at brilliant descriptions in the manner of Ovid. He also handled it with an ease and brightness hitherto unknown. The pageant of Love and Jealousy and the allegory of Hope in the second part are both such poetry as only needed something magical from

the touch of Ariosto to make them perfect.[1] As it is Lorenzo's studies in verse produce the same impression as Bronzino's in painting. They are brilliant but hard, cold, calculated, never fused by the final charm of poetry or music into a delightful vision. What is lacking is less technical skill or invention than feeling in the artist, the glow of passion, or the charm of spiritual harmony. Here is a picture of Hope's attendant train :

> Following this luckless dame, where'er she goes,
> Flit dreams in crowds, with auguries and lies,
> Chiromants, arts that cozen and impose,
> Chances, diviners, and false prophecies,
> Spoken or writ in foolish scroll and glose,
> Whose forecast brings time flown before our eyes,
> Alchemy, all who heaven from our earth measure,
> And free conjectures made at will and pleasure.
>
> Neath the dark shadow of her mighty wings
> The whole deluded world at last must cower :—
> O blindness that involves all mortal things,
> Frail ignorance that treads on human power !—
> He who can count the woes her empire brings,
> Could number every star, each fish, each flower,
> Tell all the birds that cross the autumnal seas,
> Or leaves that flutter from the naked trees.

His *Ambra* is another poem in the same style as the *Selve.* It records Lorenzo's love for that Tuscan farm which Poliziano afterwards made famous in the sonorous hexameters he dedicated to the memory of Homer.[2] Following the steps of Ovid, Lorenzo feigns that a shepherd Lauro loved the nymph Ambra, whom Umbrone, the river-god, pursued through vale

[1] *Poesie*, pp. 190–194, 200–204.

[2] See the peroration to *Ambra*, in the *Sylvæ*; Poliziano, *Prose Volgari e Poesie Latine*, etc. (Firenze, 1867), p. 365 : Et nos ergo illi, etc.

and meadow to the shores of Arno. There he would have done her violence, but that Diana changed her to a rock in her sore need:

> Ma pur, che fussi già donna ancor credi;
> Le membra mostran, come suol figura
> Bozzata e non finita in pietra dura.

This simile is characteristic both of Lorenzo's love for familiar illustration, and also of the age that dawned on Michelangelo's genius. In the same metre, but in a less ambitious style, is *La Caccia col Falcone.* This poem is the simple record of a Tuscan hawking-party, written to amuse Lorenzo's guests, but never meant assuredly to be discussed by critics after the lapse of four centuries. These pastorals, whether trifling like *La Caccia*, romantic like *Corinto*, or pictorial like *Ambra*, sink into insignificance beside *La Nencia da Barberino*—a masterpiece of true genius and humour, displaying intimate knowledge of rustic manners, and using the dialect of the Tuscan *contadini.*[1] Like the *Polyphemus* of Theocritus, but with even more of racy detail and homely fun, *La Nencia* versifies the love-lament of a hind, Vallera, who describes the charms of his sweetheart with quaint fancy, wooing her in a thousand ways, all natural, all equally in keeping with rural simplicity. It can scarcely be called a parody of village life and feeling, although we cannot fail to see that the town is laughing at the country all through the exuberant stanzas, so rich in fancy, so incomparably vivid in description. What lifts it above parody is the truth of the picture and the close imitation of rustic popular poetry[2]:

[1] *Poesie*, p. 238.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 239.

Le labbre rosse paion di corallo :
Ed havvi drento due filar di denti
Che son più bianchi che quei di cavallo :
E d' ogni lato ella n' ha più di venti.
Le gote bianche paion di cristallo
Senz' altri lisci ovver scorticamenti :
Ed in quel mezzo ell' è come una rosa.
Nel mondo non fu mai sì bella cosa.
Ben sì potrà tenere avventurato
Che sia marito di sì bella moglie ;
Ben sì potrà tenèr in buon dì nato
Chi arà quel fioraliso senza foglie ;
Ben sì potrà tener santo e beato,
Che sì contenti tutte le sue voglie
D' aver la Nencia e tenersela in braccio
Morbida e bianca che pare un sugnaccio.

These lines, chosen at random from the poem, might be paralleled from *Rispetti* that are sung to-day in Tuscany. The vividness and vigour of *La Nencia* secured for it immediate popularity. It was speedily imitated by Luigi Pulci in the *Beca da Dicomano*, a village poem that, aiming at cruder realism than Lorenzo's, broke the style and lapsed into vulgarity. *La Nencia* long continued to have imitators ; for one of the principal objects of educated poets in the Renaissance was to echo the manner of popular verse. None, however, succeeded so well as Lorenzo in touching the facts of country life and the truth of country feeling with a fine irony that had in it at least as much of sympathy as of sarcasm.

I Beoni is a plebeian poem of a different and more displeasing type. Written in *terza rima*, it distinctly parodies the style of the Divine Comedy, using the same phrases to indicate action and to mark the turns of dialogue, introducing similes in the manner of Dante,

burlesquing Virgil and Beatrice in the disgusting Bartolino and Nastagio.[1] The poem might be called The Paradise of Drunkards, or their Hell; for it consists of a succession of scenes in which intoxication in all stages and topers of every calibre are introduced. The tone is coldly satirical, sardonically comic. The old man of Tennyson's 'Vision of Sin' might have written *I Beoni* after a merry bout with the wrinkled ostler. When Lorenzo composed it, he was already corrupt and weary, sated with the world, worn with disease, disillusioned by a life of compromise, hypocrisy, diplomacy, and treason to the State he ruled. Yet the humour of this poem has nothing truly sinister or tragic. Its brutality is redeemed by no fierce Swiftian rage. If some of the descriptions in Lorenzo's earlier work remind us of Dutch flower and landscape-painters, Breughel or Van Huysum, the scenes of *I Beoni* recall the realism of Dutch tavern-pictures and Kermessen. It has the same humour, gross and yet keen, the same intellectual enjoyment of sensuality, the same animalism studied by an acute æsthetic spirit.[2]

To turn from *I Beoni* to Lorenzo's Lauds, written at his mother's request, and to the sacred play of *S. Giovanni e Paolo*, acted by his children, is to make one of those bewildering transitions which are so common in Renaissance Italy. Without rating Lorenzo's sacred poetry very high, either for religious fervour or æsthetic quality, it is yet surprising that the author of the *Beoni* and the Platonic sage of Careggi should have

[1] *Poesie*, p. 294.

[2] If anything had to be quoted from *I Beoni*, I should select the episode of Adovardo and his humorous discourse on thirst, cap. ii., *ib.* p. 299. For a loathsome parody of Dante see cap. v. *ib.* p. 315.

caught so much of the pietistic tone. We know that *S. Giovanni e Paolo* was written when he was advanced in years [1]; and the latent allusions to his illness and the cares of state which weighed upon him, give it an interest it would not otherwise excite. This couplet,

> Spesso chi chiama Costantin felice
> Sta meglio assai di me e 'l ver non dice,

seems to be a sigh from his own weariness. Lorenzo may not improbably have envied Constantine, the puppet of his fancy, at the moment of abdication. And yet when Savonarola called upon him ere his death to deal justly with Florence, the true nature of the man was seen. Had he liked it or not, he could not then have laid down the load of care and crime which it had been the business of his whole life to accumulate by crooked ways in the enslavement of Florence and the perdition of his soul's peace. The Lauds, which may be referred to an earlier period of Lorenzo's life, when his mother ruled his education, and the pious Bishop of Arezzo watched his exemplary behaviour in church with admiration, have here and there in them a touch of profound feeling [2]; nor are they in all respects inferior to the average of those included in the Florentine collection of 1863. The men of the Renaissance were so constituted that to turn from vice, and cruelty, and crime, from the deliberate corruption and enslavement of a people by licentious pleasures and the persecution of an enemy in secret, with a fervid and im-

[1] The date is 1489.

[2] Especially 'O Dio, o sommo bene,' and 'Poi ch' io gustai, Gesù;' *ib.* pp. 444, 447. Likewise 'Vieni a me;' *ib.* p. 449.

passioned movement of the soul to God, was nowise impossible. Their temper admitted of this anomaly, as we may plainly see in Cellini's Autobiography. Therefore, though it is probable that Lorenzo cultivated the Laud chiefly as a form of art, we are not justified in assuming that the passages in which we seem to detect a note of ardent piety, are insincere.

The versatility of Lorenzo's talent showed itself to greater advantage when he quitted the uncongenial ground of sacred literature and gave a free rein to his fancy in the composition of *Ballate* and Carnival songs. This species of poetry offered full scope to a temperament excessive in all pleasures of the senses.[1] It also enabled him to indulge a deeply-rooted sympathy with the common folk. Nor must it be supposed that Lorenzo was following a merely artistic impulse. This strange man, in whose complex nature opponent qualities were harmonised and intertwined, made his very sensuality subserve his statecraft. The Medici had based their power upon the favour of the proletariate. Since the days of the Ciompi riot they had pursued one line of self-aggrandisement by siding with the plebeians in their quarrels with the oligarchs. The serious purpose which underlay Lorenzo's cultivation of popular poetry, was to amuse the

[1] Guicciardini, in his *Storia Fiorentina* (*Op. Ined.* vol. iii. 88), writes of Lorenzo: 'Fu libidinoso, e tutto venereo e constante negli amori suoi, che duravano parecchi anni; la quale cosa, a giudicio di molti, gli indebolì tanto il corpo, che lo fece morire, si può dire, giovane.' Then, after describing his night-adventures outside Florence, he proceeds: 'Cosa pazza a considerare che uno di tanta grandezza, riputazione e prudenza, di età di anni quaranta, fussi sì preso di una dama non bella e già piena di anni, che si conducessi a fare cose, che sarebbono state disoneste a ogni fanciullo.'

crowd with pageantry and music, to distract their attention from State concerns and to blunt their political interest, to flatter them by descending to their level and mixing freely with them in their sports, and to acquire a popularity which should secure him from the aristocratic jealousies of the Acciaioli, the Frescobaldi, the Salviati, Soderini, and other ancestral foemen of his house. The frontispiece to an old edition of Florentine carnival songs shows him surrounded with masquers in quaint dresses, leading the revel beneath the walls of the Palazzo, while women gaze upon them from the windows.[1] That we are justified in attributing a policy of calculated enervation to Lorenzo is proved by the verdict of Machiavelli and Guicciardini, both of whom connect his successful despotism with the pageants he provided for the populace,[2] and also by this passage in Savonarola's treatise on the Government of Florence: 'The tyrant, especially in times of peace and plenty, is wont to occupy the people with shows and festivals, in order that they may think of their own pastimes and not of his designs, and, growing unused to the conduct of the commonwealth, may leave the reins of government in his hands.'[3] At the same time he would err who should suppose that Lorenzo's enjoyment of these pleasures, which he found

[1] *Canzone per andare in maschera, facte da più persone.* No place or date or printer's name; but probably issued in the lifetime of Lorenzo from Mongiani's press. There is a similar woodcut on the title-page of the *Canzone a Ballo*, Firenze, 1568. It represents the angle of the Medicean Palace in the Via Larga, girls dancing in a ring upon the street, one with a wreath and thyrsus kneeling, another presenting Lorenzo with a book.

[2] *Ist. Fior.* viii.; *Stor. Fior.* ix.

[3] *Trattato circa il Reggimento e Governo della Città di Firenze* (Florence, 1847), ii. 2.

in vogue among the people, was not genuine. He represented the worst as well as the best spirit of his age; and if he knew how to enslave Florence, it was because his own temperament shared the instincts of the crowd, while his genius enabled him to clothe obscenity with beauty.

We know that it was an ancient Florentine custom for young men and girls to meet upon the squares and dance, while a boy sang with treble voice to lute or viol, or a company of minstrels chaunted part-songs. The dancers joined in the refrain, vaunting the pleasures of the May and the delights of love in rhythms suited to the *Carola*. Taking this form of poetry from the people, Lorenzo gave it the dignity of art. Sometimes he told the tale of an unhappy lover, or pretended to be pleading with a coy mistress, or broke forth into the exultation of a passion crowned with success. Again, he urged both boys and girls to stay the flight of time nor suffer the rose-buds of their youth to fade unplucked. In more wanton moods, he satirised the very love he praised, or, casting off the mask of decency, ran riot in base bestiality. These *Canzoni a Ballo*, though they lack the supreme beauty of Poliziano's style, are stylistically graceful. Their tone never rises above sensuality. Not only has the gravity of Dante's passion passed away from Florence, but Boccaccio's sensuous ideality is gone, and the *naïveté* of popular erotic poetry is clouded with gross inuendoes. We find in them the æsthetic immorality, the brilliant materialism of the Renaissance, conveyed with careless self-abandonment to carnal impulse.

The name of Lorenzo de' Medici is still more

closely connected with the *Canti Carnascialeschi* or Carnival Songs, of which he is said to have been the first author, than with the *Ballate*, which he only used as they were handed to him. In Carnival time it was the custom of the Florentines to walk the streets, masked and singing satiric ballads. Lorenzo saw that here was an opportunity for delighting the people with the magnificence of pageantry. He caused the Triumphs in which he took a part to be carefully prepared by the best artists, the dresses of the masquers to be accurately studied, and their chariots to be adorned with illustrative paintings. Then he wrote songs appropriate to the characters represented on the cars. Singing and dancing and displaying their costumes, the band paraded Florence. Il Lasca in his introduction to the Triumphs and Carnival Songs dedicated to Don Francesco de' Medici gives the history of their invention[1]: 'This festival was invented by the Magnificent Lorenzo de' Medici. Before his time, when the cars bore mythological or allegorical masques, they were called *Trionfi*; but when they carried representatives of arts and trades, they kept the simpler name of *Carri*.' The lyrics written for the Triumphs were stately, in the style of antique odes; those intended to be sung upon the *Carri*, employed plebeian turns of phrase and dealt in almost undisguised obscenity. It was their wont, says Il Lasca, 'to go forth after dinner, and often they lasted till three or four hours into the night, with a multitude of masked men on horseback following, richly

[1] *Tutti i Trionfi, Carri, etc.*, Firenze, 1559. See also the edition dated Cosmopoli, 1750.

dressed, exceeding sometimes three hundred in number, and as many men on foot with lighted torches. Thus they traversed the city, singing to the accompaniment of music arranged for four, eight, twelve, or even fifteen voices, supported by various instruments.'

Lorenzo's fancy took the Florentine mind. From his days onward these shows were repeated every year, the best artists and poets contributing their genius to make them splendid. In the collection of songs written for the Carnival, we find Masques of Scholars, Artisans, Frog-catchers, Furies, Tinkers, Women selling grapes, Old men and Young wives, Jewellers, German Lansknechts, Gypsies, Wool-carders, Penitents, Devils, Jews, Hypocrites, Young men who have lost their fathers, Wiseacres, Damned Souls, Tortoiseshell Cats, Perfumers, Masons, Mountebanks, Mirror-makers, Confectioners, Prudent persons, Lawyers, Nymphs in love, Nuns escaped from convent—not to mention the Four Ages of Man, the Winds, the Elements, Peace, Calumny, Death, Madness, and a hundred abstractions of that kind. The tone of these songs is uniformly and deliberately immoral. One might fancy them composed for some old phallic festival. Their wit is keen and lively, presenting to the fancy of the student all the humours of a brilliant bygone age. A strange and splendid spectacle it must have been, when Florence, the city of art and philosophy, ran wild in Dionysiac revels proclaiming the luxury and licence of the senses! Beautiful maidens, young men in rich clothes on prancing steeds, showers of lilies and violets, triumphal arches of spring flowers and ribbons, hail-storms of comfits, torches flaring to the sallow evening

sky—we can see the whole procession as it winds across the Ponte Vecchio, emerges into the great square, and slowly gains the open space beneath the dome of Brunelleschi and the tower of Giotto. The air rings with music as they come, bass and tenor and shrill treble mingling with the sound of lute and cymbal. The people hush their cheers to listen. It is Lorenzo's Triumph of Bacchus, and here are the words they sing:

Fair is youth and void of sorrow;
But it hourly flies away.—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day;
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

This is Bacchus and the bright
Ariadne, lovers true!
They, in flying time's despite,
Each with each find pleasure new;
These their Nymphs, and all their crew
Keep perpetual holiday.—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day;
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

These blithe Satyrs, wanton-eyed,
Of the Nymphs are paramours:
Through the caves and forests wide
They have snared them mid the flowers.
Warmed with Bacchus, in his bowers,
Now they dance and leap alway.—
Youths and maids enjoy to-day;
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

These fair Nymphs, they are not loth
To entice their lovers' wiles.
None but thankless folk and rough
Can resist when Love beguiles.
Now enlaced with wreathèd smiles,
All together dance and play.—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day;
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

See this load behind them plodding
On the ass, Silenus he,
Old and drunken, merry, nodding,
Full of years and jollity ;
Though he goes so swayingly,
Yet he laughs and quaffs alway.—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day ;
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

Midas treads a wearier measure :
All he touches turns to gold :
If there be no taste of pleasure,
What's the use of wealth untold ?
What's the joy his fingers hold,
When he's forced to thirst for aye ?—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day ;
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

Listen well to what we're saying ;
Of to-morrow have no care !
Young and old together playing,
Boys and girls, be blithe as air !
Every sorry thought forswear !
Keep perpetual holiday.—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day ;
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

Ladies and gay lovers young !
Long live Bacchus, live Desire !
Dance and play, let songs be sung ;
Let sweet Love your bosoms fire ;
In the future come what may !—
Youths and maids, enjoy to-day ;
Nought ye know about to-morrow.

On rolls the car, and the crowd closes round it, rending the old walls with shattering hurrahs. Then a corner of the street is turned ; while soaring still above the hubbub of the town we hear at intervals that musical refrain. Gradually it dies away in the distance, and fainter and more faintly still the treble floats to us in broken waifs of sound—the echo of a lyric heard in dreams.

Such were the songs that reached Savonarola's ears,

writing or meditating in his cloister at S. Marco. Such were the sights that moved his indignation as he trod the streets of Florence. Then he bethought him of his famous parody of the Carnival, the bonfire of Vanities, and the hymn in praise of divine madness sung by children dressed in white like angels.[1] Yet Florence,

[1] In this place should be noticed a sinister Carnival Song, by an unknown author, which belongs, I think, to the period of Savonarola's democracy. It is called *Trionfo del Vaglio*, or 'Triumph of the Sieve' (*Cant. Carn.* p. 33):

To the Sieve, to the Sieve, to the Sieve,
Ho, all ye folk, descend!
With groans your bosoms rend!
And find in this our Sieve
Wrath, anguish, travail, doom for all who live!
To winnow, sift and purge, full well we know,
And grind your souls like corn:
Ye who our puissance scorn,
Come ye to trial, ho!
For we will prove and show
How fares the man who enters in our Sieve.
Send us no groats nor scrannel seed nor rye,
But good fat ears of grain,
Which shall endure our strain,
And be of sturdy stuff.
Torment full stern and rough
Abides for him who resteth in our Sieve.
Who comes into this Sieve, who issues thence,
Hath tears and sighs, and mourns:
But the Sieve ever turns,
And gathers vehemence.
Ye who feel sin's offence,
Shun ye the rage, the peril of our Sieve.
A thousand times the day, our Sieve is crowned;
A thousand times 'tis drained:
Let the Sieve once be strained,
And, grain by grain, around
Ye shall behold the ground..
Covered with folk, cast from the boltering Sieve.
Ye who are not well-grained and strong to bear,
Abide ye not this fate!
Penitence comes too late!
Seek ye some milder doom!
Nay, better were the tomb
Than to endure the torment of our Sieve!

warned in vain by the friar, took no thought for the morrow; and the morrow came to all Italy with war, invasion, pestilence, innumerable woes. In the last year of Pier Soderini's Gonfalonierato (1512) it seemed as though the Italians had been quickened to a consciousness of their impending ruin. The siege of Brescia, the battle of Ravenna, the League of Cambray, the massacres of Prato, the sack of Rome, the fall of Florence, were all imminent. A fascination of intolerable fear thrilled the people in the midst of their heedlessness, and this fear found voice and form in a strange Carnival pageant described by Vasari[1]: 'The triumphal car was covered with black cloth, and was of vast size; it had skeletons and white crosses painted upon its surface, and was drawn by buffaloes, all of which were totally black: within the car stood the colossal figure of Death, bearing the scythe in his hand; while around him were covered tombs, which opened at all the places where the procession halted, while those who formed it, chanted lugubrious songs, when certain figures stole forth, clothed in black cloth, on whose vestments the bones of a skeleton were depicted in white; the arms, breast, ribs, and legs, namely, all which gleamed horribly forth on the black beneath. At a certain distance appeared figures bearing torches, and wearing masks presenting the face of a death's head both before and behind; these heads of death as well as the skeleton necks beneath them, also exhibited to view, were not only painted with the utmost fidelity to nature, but had besides a frightful expression

[1] Life of Piero di Cosimo.

which was horrible to behold. At the sound of a wailing summons, sent forth with a hollow moan from trumpets of muffled yet inexorable clangour, the figures of the dead raised themselves half out of their tombs, and seating their skeleton forms thereon, they sang the following words, now so much extolled and admired, to music of the most plaintive and melancholy character. Before and after the car rode a train of the dead on horses, carefully selected from the most wretched and meagre animals that could be found: the caparisons of those worn, half-dying beasts were black, covered with white crosses; each was conducted by four attendants, clothed in the vestments of the grave; these last-mentioned figures, bearing black torches and a large black standard, covered with crosses, bones, and death's heads. While this train proceeded on its way, each sang, with a trembling voice, and all in dismal unison, that psalm of David called the Miserere. The novelty and the terrible character of this singular spectacle, filled the whole city, as I have before said, with a mingled sensation of terror and admiration; and although at the first sight it did not seem well calculated for a Carnival show, yet being new, and within the reach of every man's comprehension, it obtained the highest encomium for Piero as the author and contriver of the whole, and was the cause as well as commencement of numerous representations, so ingenious and effective that by these things Florence acquired a reputation for the conduct of such subjects and the arrangement of similar spectacles such as was never equalled by any other city.'

Of this Carnival song, composed by Antonio Alamanni, I here give an English version.

Sorrow, tears, and penitence
Are our doom of pain for aye ;
This dead concourse riding by
Hath no cry but Penitence.

Even as you are, once were we :
You shall be as now we are :
We are dead men, as you see :
We shall see you dead men, where
Nought avails to take great care
After sins of penitence.

We too in the Carnival
Sang our love-song through the town ;
Thus from sin to sin we all
Headlong, heedless, tumbled down ;
Now we cry, the world around,
Penitence, oh penitence !

Senseless, blind, and stubborn fools !
Time steals all things as he rides :
Honours, glories, states, and schools,
Pass away, and nought abides ;
Till the tomb our carcase hides,
And compels grim penitence.

This sharp scythe you see us bear,
Brings the world at length to woe ;
But from life to life we fare ;
And that life is joy or woe ;
All heaven's bliss on him doth flow,
Who on earth does penitence.

Living here, we all must die ;
Dying, every soul shall live,
For the King of kings on high
This fixed ordinance doth give :
Lo ! you all are fugitive :
Penitence, cry penitence !

Torment great and grievous dole
Hath the thankless heart mid you :
But the man of piteous soul
Finds much honour in our crew :
Love for loving is the due
That prevents this penitence.

These words sounded in the ears of the people, already terrified by the unforgotten voice of Savonarola, like a trump of doom. The pageant was, indeed, an acted allegory of the death of Italy, the repentance after judgment of a nation fallen in its sins. Yet a few months passed, and the same streets echoed with the music of yet another show, which has also been described by Vasari.[1] If the Car of Death expressed the uneasy dread that fell on the Italians at the opening of the century, the shows of 1513 allegorised their mad confidence in the fortune of the age, which was still more deeply felt and widely shared. Giovanni de' Medici had just been elevated to the Papal Chair, and was paying a holiday visit to his native city. Giuliano de' Medici, his brother, the Duke of Nemours, was also resident in Florence, where he had formed a club of noble youths called the Diamond. Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, the titular chief of the house, presided over a rival Company named Il Broncone—with a withered laurel-branch, whence leaves were sprouting, for its emblem. The Diamond signified the constancy of Casa Medici; the withered branch their power of self-recovery. These two men, Giuliano and Lorenzo, are the same who now confront each other upon their pedestals in Michelangelo's Sacristy of S. Lorenzo. Both were doomed to an

[1] Life of Pontormo.

untimely death; but in the year 1513, when Leo's election shed new lustre on their house, they were still in the heyday of prosperity and hope. Giuliano resolved that the Diamond should make a goodly show. Therefore he entrusted the invention and the poems to Andrea Dazzi, who then held Poliziano's chair of Greek and Latin literature. Dazzi devised three Cars after the fashion of a Roman triumph. For the construction of each chariot an excellent architect was chosen; for its decoration the painter Pontormo was appointed. In the first rode beautiful boys; in the second, powerful men; in the third, reverend grandsires. Lorenzo, in competition with his uncle, determined that the Laurel branch should outrival the Diamond. He applied to Jacopo Nardi, the historian of Florence and translator of Livy. Nardi composed a procession of seven chariots to symbolise the Golden Age, and wrote appropriate poems for each, which are still extant. In the first car rode Saturn and Janus, attended by six shepherds of goodly form, naked, on horses without harness. In the second sat Numa Pompilius, surrounded by priests in antique raiment. The third carried Titus Manlius, whose consulship beheld the close of the first Punic war. In the fifth Augustus sat enthroned, accompanied by twelve laurelled poets. The horses that drew him, were winged. The sixth carried Trajan, the just emperor, with doctors of the law on either side. All these chariots were adorned with emblems painted by Pontormo. The seventh car held a globe to represent the world. Upon it lay a dead man in a suit of rusty iron armour, from the cloven plates of which emerged a

living child, naked and gilt with glistering leaf of gold. This signified the passing of the Iron, and the opening of the Golden Age—the succession of the Renaissance to feudalism—the fortunes of Italy reviving after her disasters in the sunlight of the smiles of Leo. *Magnus sæclorum nàscitur ordo!* 'The world's great age begins anew; the golden years return!' Thus the artists, scholars, and poets of Florence symbolised in a Carnival show the advent of the Renaissance. The boy who represented the Golden Age, died of the sufferings he endured beneath his gilding; and his father, who was a baker, received ten scudi of indemnity. A fanciful historian might read in this little incident the irony of fate, warning the Italians that the age they welcomed would perish for them in its bloom. In the year 1513 Luther was already thirty years of age, and Charles V. in the Low Countries was a boy of thirteen, accumulating knowledge under the direction of the future Adrian VI. Whatever destiny of gold the Renaissance might through Italy be offering to Europe, it was on the point of pouring blood and fastening heavier chains on every city of the sacred land.

In my desire to bring together these three representative festivals—Lorenzo's Triumph of Bacchus, Alamanni's Car of Death, and Pontormo's Pageant of the Golden Age—marking three moments in the Florentine Renaissance, and three diverse moods of feeling in the people—I have transgressed the chronological limits of this chapter. I must now return to the year 1464, when a boy of ten years old, destined to revive the glories of Italian literature with far greater

lustre than Lorenzo, came from Montepulciano to Florence, and soon won the notice of the Medicean princes. Angelo Ambrogini, surnamed Poliziano from his home above the Chiana, has already occupied a prominent place in this work.[1] It is not, therefore, needful to retrace the history of his uneventful life, or again to fix his proper rank among the scholars of the fifteenth century. He was the greatest student, and the greatest poet in Greek and Latin, that Italy has produced. In the history of European scholarship, he stands midway between Petrarch and Erasmus, taking the post of honour at the moment when erudition had acquired ease and elegance, but had not yet passed on into the final stage of scientific criticism. What concerns us here, is Poliziano's achievement as an Italian poet. In the history of the vulgar literature he fills a place midway between Petrarch and Ariosto, corresponding to the station of distinction I have assigned to him in humanistic culture. Of few men can it be said that they have held the same high rank in poetry and learning; and had the moral fibre of Poliziano, his intellectual tension and his spiritual aim, been at all commensurate with his twofold ability, the Italians might have shown in him a fourth singer equal in magnitude to their greatest. As it was, the excellence of his work was marred by the defect of his temperament, and has far less value for the general reader than for the student of versification.

Lorenzo de' Medici could boast of having restored the mother tongue to a place of honour among the learned. But he was far from being the complete

[1] *Revival of Learning*, pp. 345-357, 452-465.

artist that the age required. 'That exquisite flower of sentiment we call good taste, that harmony of intellect we call judgment, lies not within the grasp of power or riches.'[1] A man was needed who should combine creative genius with refined tact in the use of language; who should be competent to carry the tradition of Italian poetry beyond the point where Boccaccio dropped it, while giving to his work the polish and the splendour of a classic masterpiece. It was further necessary that this new dictator of the literary commonwealth should have left the Middle Age so far behind as not to be aware of its stern spirit. He must have acquired the erudition of his eminently learned century —a century in which knowledge was the pearl of great price; not the knowledge of righteousness; not the knowledge of nature and her laws; but the knowledge of the life that throbbed in ancient peoples, the life that might, it seemed, yet make the old world young again. Moreover, he must be strong enough to carry this erudition without bending beneath its weight; dexterous enough to use it without pedantry; exuberant enough in natural resources to reduce his stores of learning, his wealth of fancy, his thronging emotions, to one ruling harmony—fusing all reminiscences in one style of pure and copious Italian. He must be gifted with that reverent sense of beauty, which was the sole surviving greatness of his century, animating the imagination of its artists, and justifying the proud boast of its students. This man was found in Angelo Poliziano. He, and only he, was destined, by combining the finish of the

[1] Carducci, Preface to his edition of *Le Stanze, L'Orfeo e Le Rime di Messer Angelo Ambrogini Poliziano* (Firenze, 1863), p. xxiii.

classics with the freshness of a language still in use, to inaugurate the golden age of form. Faustus, the genius of the middle ages, had wedded Helen, the vision of the ancient world. Their son, Euphorion, the inheritor of all their gifts, we hail in Poliziano.

When Poliziano composed *Le Stanze* he was nearly twenty-four years of age.[1] He had steeped himself in the classic literatures. Endowed with a marvellous memory, he possessed their spirit and their substance. Not less familiar with Tuscan poetry of the fourteenth century, he commanded the stores of Dante's, Petrarch's and Boccaccio's diction. Long practice in Greek and Latin composition had given him mastery over the metrical systems of the ancient languages.[2] The daily habit of inditing songs for music to please the ladies of the Medicean household, had accustomed him to the use of fluent Italian. The translation of the *Iliad*, performed in part before he was eighteen, had made him a faithful imitator, while it added dignity and fulness to his style.[3] Besides these qualifications for his future task of raising Italian to an equality wth Latin poetry, he brought with him to this achieve-

[1] This poem must have been written between 1476, the date of Simonetta's death, and 1478, the date of Giuliano's murder, when Poliziano was about twenty-four. Chronology prevents us from regarding it as the work of a boy of fourteen, as Roscoe thought, or of sixteen, as Hallam concluded.

[2] His Latin elegies on Simonetta and on Albiera degli Albizzi, and those Greek epigrams which Scaliger preferred to the Latin verses of his maturity, had been already written.

[3] From *Le Stanze*, i. 7, we learn that he interrupted the translation of the *Iliad* in order to begin this poem in Italian. He never took it up again. It remains a noble torso, the most splendid extant version of a Greek poem in Latin by a modern hand.

ment a genius apt to comprehend the spirit of the Renaissance in its pomp and liberty and tranquil loveliness. The noble and yet sensuous manner of the great Venetian painters, their dignity of form, their luxury of colour, their boldness and decision, their imperturbable serenity of mundane joy—the choicer delicacy of the Florentine masters, their refinement of outline, selection of type, suggestion of restrained emotion—the pure design of the Tuscan sculptors, the suavity and flexibility of the Lombard *plasticatori*—all these qualities of Italian figurative art appear, as it were in bud, in the *Stanze*. Poliziano's crowning merit as a stylist was that he knew how to blend the antique and the romantic, correct drawing with fleshly fulness. Breadth of design and harmony of colour have rarely been produced in more magnificent admixture. The octave stanza, which in the hands of Boccaccio was languid and diffuse, in the hands of Lorenzo harsh, in the hands of Pulci rugged, became under Poliziano's treatment an inexhaustible instrument of varying melodies. At one time, beneath his touch, the metre takes an epic dignity; again it sinks to idyllic sweetness, or mourns with the elegy, or exults with the ode. Its movement is rapid or relaxed, smooth or vibrating, undulatory or impetuous, as he has chosen. When we reflect how many generations of poets it required to bring the Sonnet to completeness, we may marvel at this youth, in an age when scholarship absorbed inventive genius, who was able at one stroke to do for the octave stanza what Marlowe did for our Blank Verse. Poliziano gave to Ariosto the Italian epical metre perfected,

and established a standard of style amid the anarchy which threatened the literature of Italy with ruin.

Yet it must be confessed that, after all, it is chiefly the style of Poliziano that deserves praise. Like so much else of Renaissance work—like the Farnesina frescoes in Rome, or Giulio Romano's luxuriant arabesques at Mantua, or the efflorescence of foliage and cupids in the bas-reliefs of palace portals at Venice—there is but little solid thought or serious feeling underneath this decorative richness. Those who cannot find a pleasure in form for its own sake, independent of matter, will never be able to do Poliziano justice. This brings us to the subject of the *Stanze*. They were written to celebrate the prowess of Giuliano de' Medici, Lorenzo's brother, in a tournament held at Florence in the beginning of the year 1478. This fact is worth consideration. The poem which opened a new age for Italian literature, had no nobler theme than a Court pageant. Dante had been inspired to sing the epic of the human soul. Petrarch finished a portrait of the life through love of an impassioned man. Boccaccio bound up in one volume a hundred tales, delineating society in all its aspects. Then the Muse of Italy fell asleep. Poliziano aroused her with the full deep intonations of a golden instrument. But what was the burden of his song? Giuliano de' Medici loved the fair Simonetta, and bore away the prize in a toy-tournament.

This marks the change effected by a century of prince-craft. Henceforth great poets were to care less for what they sang than for the style in which they sang. Henceforth poetry in Italy was written to

please—to please patrons who were flattered with false pedigrees and absurd mythologies, with the imputation of virtues they never possessed, and with the impudent palliation of shame apparent to the world. Henceforth the bards of Ausonia deigned to tickle the ears of lustful boys and debauched cardinals, buying the bread of courtly sloth—how salt it tasted let Tasso and Guarini tell—with jests or panegyrics. Liberty could scarcely be named in verse when natives and strangers vied together in enslaving Italy. To praise the great deeds of bygone heroes within hearing of pusillanimous princes, would have been an insult. Even satires upon a degraded present, aspirations after a noble future, prophecies of resurrection from the tomb—those last resorts of a national literature that retains its strength through evil days—were unknown upon the lips of the Renaissance poets. Art had become a thing of pleasure, sometimes infamous, too often nugatory. The fault of this can scarcely be said to have rested with one man more than with another; nor can we lay the blame on Poliziano, though he undoubtedly represented the class who were destined to continue literature upon these lines. It was the combined result of scholarship, which for a whole century had diverted the minds of men to the form and words of literature; of court-life, which had enfeebled the recipients of princely patronage; of tyranny, which encouraged flattery, dissimulation, and fraud; of foreign oppression, which already was beginning to enervate a race of slaves; of revived paganism, which set the earlier beliefs and aspirations of the soul at unequal warfare with emancipated lusts and

sensualities; of indolence, which loved to toy with trifles, instead of thinking and creating thought; of social inequalities, which forced the poet to eat a master's bread, and turned the scholars of Italy into a crowd of servile and yet arrogant beggars. All these circumstances, and many more of the same kind, were slowly and surely undermining the vigour of the Italian intellect. Over the meridian splendour of *Le Stanze* we already see their influences floating like a vaporous miasma.

Italy, though never so chivalrous as the rest of Europe, yet preserved the pompous festivities of feudalism. Jousts were held in all great cities, and it was reckoned part of a courtier's business to be a skilful cavalier. At Florence the custom survived of celebrating the first of May with tournaments, and on great occasions the wealthy families spent large sums of money in providing pastimes of this sort. February 7, 1468, witnessed a splendid spectacle, when Lorenzo de' Medici mounted successively on chargers presented to him by the Duke of Ferrara and the King of Naples, attired in armour given by the Duke of Milan, bearing the *fleurs de lys* of France conferred upon the Medici by Louis XI., and displaying on his pennon for a motto *Le Tems revient*, won the prize of valour before the populace assembled in the square of S. Croce. Luca Pulci, the descendant of an ancient house of Tuscan nobles, composed an adulatory poem in octave stanzas on this event. So changed were the times that this scion of Florentine aristocracy felt no shame in fawning on a despot risen from the people to enslave his city. Yet the spectacle was worthy

celebration. Lorenzo, the banker's son, the Platonist, the diplomatist and tyrant, charging in the lists of feudalism beneath Arnolfo's tower, with the lilies of France upon his shield and the device of the Renaissance on his banner—this figured symbol of the meeting of two ages in a single man was no mean subject for a poem!

From Poliziano's *Stanze* we learn no such characteristic details concerning Giuliano's later tournament. Though the poem is called *La Giostra*, the insignificant subject disappears beneath a wealth of illustration. The episodes, including the pictures of the Golden Age and of the garden and palace of Venus, form the real strength of a masterpiece which blent the ancient and the modern world in a work of art glowing with Italian fancy. That *La Giostra* has no subject-matter, no theme of weight to wear the poet thin through years of anxious toil, no progress from point to point, no chain of incidents and no romantic evolution, is a matter of little moment. When Giuliano de' Medici died before the altar by the hand of an assassin on April 26, 1478, Poliziano laid down his pen and left the *Stanze* unfinished.[1] It cannot be said that the poem suffered, or that posterity lost by this abrupt termination of a work conceived without a central thought. Enough had been already done to present Italy with a model of the style she needed; and if we ask why *La Giostra* should have become imme-

[1] By a strange coincidence this was the anniversary of his love, Simonetta's, death in 1476. The close connection between her untimely end—celebrated by Lorenzo de' Medici in his earlier *Rime*, by Poliziano in his Latin Elegy and again in the *Giostra*—and the renascence of Italian poetry, makes her portrait by Piero della Francesca in the Pitti interesting.

diately popular in spite of its peculiar texture and its abrupt conclusion, the answer is not far to seek. Poliziano incarnated the spirit of his age, and gave the public what satisfied their sense of fitness. The three chief enthusiasms of the fifteenth century—for classical literature, for artistic beauty, and for nature tranquilly enjoyed—were so fused and harmonised within the poet's soul as to produce a style of unmistakeable originality and charming ease. Poliziano felt the delights of the country with serene idyllic rapture, not at second hand through the ancients, but with the voluptuous enjoyment of the Florentine who loved his villa. He had, besides, a sense of form analogous to that possessed by the artists of his age, which guided him in the selection and description of the scenes he painted. Again, his profound and refined erudition enabled him 'to shower,' as Giovio phrased it, 'the finest flowers of antique poetry upon the people.' Therefore, while he felt nature like one who worshipped her for her own sake and for the joy she gave him, he saw in her the subjects of a thousand graceful pictures, and these pictures he studied through a radiant haze of antique reminiscences. Each stanza of *La Giostra* is a mimic world of beauty, art, and scholarship; a painting where the object stands before us modelled with relief of light and shade in finely modulated hues; a brief anthology of daintily-culled phrases, wafting to our memories the perfume of Greece, Rome, and Florence in her prime. These delicate little masterpieces are, turn by turn, a picture of Botticelli, a fresco by Giulio Romano, an engraving of Mantegna, a bas-relief of young Buonarroti, or a

garden-scene of Gozzoli, expressed in the purest diction of all literatures by a poet who, while imitating, never ceased to be original.[1] Nothing more was needed by a nation of idyllic dreamers, artists and scholars.

What Poliziano might have achieved, if he had found a worthy theme for the employment of his powers, it would be idle to ask. It is perhaps the condemnation of the man and of his age that the former did not seek heroic subjects for song, and the latter did not demand them—in a word that neither poet nor public had in them anything heroic whatsoever. The fact is undeniably true; but this does not deprive Poliziano of the merit of such verses as the following:

After such happy wise, in ancient years,
Dwelt the old nations in the age of gold;
Nor had the fount been stirr'd of mothers' tears
For sons in war's fell labour stark and cold;
Nor trusted they to ships the wild wind steers,
Nor yet had oxen groaning ploughed the wold;
Their houses were huge oaks, whose trunks had store
Of honey; and whose boughs thick acorns bore.

Nor yet, in that glad time, the accursèd thirst
Of cruel gold had fallen on this fair earth:

[1] I must refer my readers to the original, and to the translations published by me in *Sketches and Studies in Italy*, p. 217–224. The description of Simonetta in the meadow (*Giostra*, i. 43 and following) might be compared to a Florentine Idyll by Benozzo Gozzoli; the birth of Venus from the waves (i. 99–107) is a blending of Botticelli's *Venus* in the Uffizzi with his *Primavera* in the Belle Arti; the picture of Venus in the lap of Mars (i. 122–124) might be compared to work by Piero di Cosimo, or, since poetry embraces many suggestions, to paintings from the schools of Venice. The metamorphoses of Jupiter (i. 104–107) remind us of Giulio Romano. The episode of Ariadne and the Bacchic revel (i. 110–112) is in the style of Mantegna's engravings. All these passages will be found translated by me in the book above quoted.

Joyous in liberty they lived at first ;
Unploughed the fields sent forth their teeming birth:
Till fortune, envious of such concord, burst
The bond of law, and pity banned and worth ;
Within their breasts sprang luxury and that rage
Which men call love in our degenerate age.

A somewhat earlier composition than *La Giostra* was *La Favola di Orfeo*, a dramatic poem similar in form to the *Sacra Rappresentazione*, with a classical instead of a religious subject.[1] To call it a tragedy would be to dignify it with too grand a title. To class it with pastorals is equally impossible, though the songs of the shepherds and wood-nymphs may be said to have anticipated the style of Tasso's *Aminta* and Guarini's *Pastor Fido*. Nor again is it properly speaking an opera, though it was undoubtedly meant for music. The *Orfeo* combined tragedy, the pastoral, and the opera in a mixed work of melodramatic art, which by its great popularity inspired the poets of Italy to produce specimens of each kind, and prepared the public to receive them.[2] Still, in form and movement, it adhered to the traditions of the *Sacra Rappresenta-*

[1] I believe the *Favola di Orfeo*, first published in 1494, and republished from time to time up to the year 1776, was the original play acted at Mantua before the Cardinal Gonzaga. It is not divided into acts, and has the usual 'Annunziatore della Festa' of the *Sacre Rappresentazioni*. The *Orphei Tragœdia*, published by the Padre Ireneo Affò at Venice in 1776, from two MSS. collated by him, may be regarded as a subsequent recension of his own work made by Poliziano. It is divided into five acts, and is far richer in lyrical passages. Carducci prints both in his excellent edition of Poliziano's Italian poems. I may refer English readers to my own translation of the *Orfeo* and the note upon its text, *Studies and Sketches in Italy*, pp. 226–242, 429, 430.

[2] The popularity of Poliziano's poems is proved by the frequency of their editions. The *Orfeo* and the *Stanze* were printed together or separately twenty-two times between 1494 and 1541, thirteen times between 1541 and 1653. A redaction of the *Orfeo* in octave stanzas was

zione, and its originality consisted in the substitution of a Pagan for a Christian fable.

Unerring instinct guided Poliziano in the choice of his subject. Orpheus was the proper hero of Renaissance Italy—the civiliser of a barbarous world by art and poetry, the lover of beauty, who dared to invade Hell and moved the iron heart of Pluto with a song. Long before the composition of *Orfeo*, Boccaccio had presented the same conception of society humanised by culture in his *Ninfale Fiesolano*. This was the ideal of the Renaissance; and, what is more, it accurately symbolised the part played by Italy after the dissolution of the middle ages. In the myth of Orpheus the humanism of the Revival became conscious of itself. This fable was the Mystery of the new age, the allegory of the work appointed for the nation. Did we dare to press a metaphor to the verge of the fantastic, we might even read in the martyrdom of Orpheus by the Mænads a prophecy of the Italian doom. Italy, who had aroused Europe from lethargy with the voice of poetry and learning, who had inaugurated a new age of civil and social refinement, who thought she could resist the will of God by arts and elegant accomplishments, after triumphing over the rude forces of nature was now about to violate the laws of nature in her vices, and to fall a victim to the Mænads of incurrent barbarism, inebriate with wine and blood, indifferent to the magic of the lyre, avengers blindly following the dictates of a power that rules the destinies

published at Florence in 1558 for the use of the common people. It was entitled *La Historia e Favola d' Orfeo alla dolce lira.* This narrative version of Poliziano's play is still reprinted from time to time for the Tuscan *contadini.* Carducci cites an edition of Prato, 1860.

of nations. Of this Italy, Poliziano, the author of *Orfeo*, was himself the representative hero, the protagonist, the intellectual dictator.[1]

The *Orfeo* was sent with a letter of dedication to Messer Carlo Canale, the obsequious husband of that Vannozza, who bore Cesare and Lucrezia Borgia to the Pope Alexander VI. Poliziano says that he 'wrote this play at the request of the Most Reverend the Cardinal of Mantua, in the space of two days, among continual disturbances, and in the vulgar tongue, that it might be the better comprehended by the spectators.' He adds: 'This child of mine is of a sort to bring more shame than honour on its father.'

There is good reason to believe that the year 1472, when the Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga returned from Bologna to Mantua, and was received with 'triumphs and pomps, great feasts and banquets,' was the date of its composition. If so, the *Orfeo* was written at the age of eighteen. It could not have been played later than 1483, for in that year the Cardinal died. At eighteen Poliziano was already famous for his translation of the *Iliad*. He had gained the title of *Homericus Juvenis*, and was celebrated for his powers of improvisation.[2] That he should have put the *Orfeo* together in forty-eight hours is hardly so remarkable as that he should have translated Herodian in the

[1] No one who has read Poliziano's Greek epigrams on Chrysocomus, or who knows the scandal falsely circulated regarding his death, will have failed to connect the sentiments put into the mouth of Orpheus (Carducci, pp. 109–110) with the personality of the poet-scholar. That the passage in question could have been recited with applause before a Cardinal, is a fact of much significance.

[2] Perhaps Ficino was the first to give him this title. In a letter of his to Lorenzo de' Medici we read: 'Nutris domi Homericum illum adolescentem Angelum Politianum qui Græcam Homeri personam Latinis

space of a few days, while walking and dictating. For the *Orfeo* is but a slight piece, though beautiful and pregnant with the germs of many styles to be developed from its scenes. The plot is simple, and the whole play numbers no more than 434 lines.

To do the *Orfeo* justice, we ought to have heard it with its own accompaniment of music. Viewed as a tragedy, judged by the standard of our Northern drama, it will always prove a disappointment. That mastery over the complex springs of human nature which distinguished the first efforts of Marlowe, is almost wholly absent. A certain adaptation of the language to the characters, in the rudeness of Thyrsis when contrasted with the rustic elegance of Aristæus; a touch of feeling in Eurydice's outcry of farewell; a discrimination between the tender sympathy of Proserpine and Pluto's stern relenting; a spirited representation of Bacchanalian enthusiasm in the Mænads; an attempt to model the Satyr Mnesillus as apart from human nature and yet conscious of its anguish—these points constitute the chief dramatic features of the melodrama. But where there was the opportunity of a really tragic movement, Poliziano failed. We have only to read the lament uttered by Orpheus for the loss of Eurydice, in order to perceive how fine a situation has been spoiled. The pathos which might have made us sympathise with the lover in his misery, the passion approaching frenzy which might have justified

coloribus exprimat. Exprimit jam; atque, id quod mirum est ita tenerâ ætate, ita exprimit ut nisi quivis Græcum fuisse Homerum noverit dubitaturus sit e duobus uter naturalis sit et uter pictus Homerus' (*Ep.* ed. Flor. 1494, lib. i. p. 6). Ficino always addressed Poliziano as 'Poeta Homericus.'

his misogyny, are absent. Poliziano seems to have already felt the inspiration of the Bacchic chorus which concludes the play, and to have forgotten his duty to his hero, whose sorrow for Eurydice is stultified and made unmeaning by the prosaic expression of a base resolve. Yet, when we return from these criticisms to the real merit of the piece, we find in it a charm of musical language, a subtlety of musical movement, which are irresistibly fascinating. Thought and feeling seem alike refined to a limpidity that suits the flow of melody in song. The very words evaporate and lose themselves in floods of sound. Orpheus himself is a purely lyrical personage. Of character, he can scarcely be said to have anything marked; and his part rises to its height precisely in the passage where the singer has to be displayed. Thus the *Orfeo* is a good poem only where the situation is less dramatic than lyrical, and its finest scene was, fortunately for the author, one in which the dramatic motive could be lyrically expressed. Before the gates of Hades and the throne of Proserpine, Orpheus sings, and his singing is the right outpouring of a musician-poet's soul. Each octave resumes the theme of the last stanza with a swell of utterance, a *crescendo* of intonation, that recalls the passionate and unpremeditated descant of a bird upon the boughs alone. To this true quality of music is added the persuasiveness of pleading. Even while we read, the air seems to vibrate with pure sound, and the rich recurrence of the tune is felt upon the opening of each successive stanza. That the melody of this incomparable song is lost, must be reckoned a misfortune. We have reason to

believe that the part of Orpheus was taken by Messer Baccio Ugolini, singing to the viol.[1]

Space does not permit me to detach the whole scene in Hades from the play and print it here; to quote a portion of it would be nothing less than mutilation.[2] I must content myself with this Chorus of the Mænads, which contains, as in a kernel, the whole dithyrambic poetry of the Italians:

Bacchus! we all must follow thee!
Bacchus! Bacchus! Ohé! Ohé!

With ivy coronals, bunch and berry,
Crown we our heads to worship thee!
Thou hast bidden us to make merry
Day and night with jollity!
Drink then! Bacchus is here! Drink free,
And hand ye the drinking-cup to me!
Bacchus! we all must follow thee!
Bacchus! Bacchus! Ohé! Ohé!

See, I have emptied my horn already;
Stretch hither your beaker to me, I pray;
Are the hills and the lawns where we roam unsteady?
Or is it my brain that reels away?
Let every one run to and fro through the hay,
As ye see me run! Ho! after me!
Bacchus! we all must follow thee!
Bacchus! Bacchus! Ohé! Ohé!

[1] Among the frescoes by Signorelli at Orvieto there is a *tondo* in monochrome, representing Orpheus before the throne of Pluto. He is dressed like a poet, with a laurel crown, and he is playing on a violin of antique form. Medieval demons are guarding the prostrate Eurydice. It would be curious to know whether a rumour of the Mantuan pageant had reached the ears of the Cortonese painter, or whether he had read the edition of 1494.

[2] The original should be read in the version first published by the Padre Affò (Carducci, pp. 148–154). My translation will be found in *Studies and Sketches in Italy*, pp. 235–237.

Methinks I am dropping in swoon or slumber ;
Am I drunken or sober, yes or no ?
What are these weights my feet encumber ?
You too are tipsy, well I know !
Let every one do as ye see me do,
Let every one drink and quaff like me !
Bacchus ! we all must follow thee !
Bacchus ! Bacchus ! Ohé ! Ohé !

Cry Bacchus ! Cry Bacchus ! Be blithe and merry,
Tossing wine down your throats away !
Let sleep then come and our gladness bury :
Drink you, and you, and you, while ye may !
Dancing is over for me to-day.
Let every one cry aloud Evohé !
Bacchus ! we all must follow thee !
Bacchus ! Bacchus ! Ohé ! Ohé !

It remains to speak of the third class of poems which the great scholar and supple courtier flung like wild flowers with a careless hand from the chariot of his triumph to the Capitolian heights of erudition. Small store, indeed, he set by them—these Italian love-songs, hastily composed to please Donna Ippolita Leoncina, the titular mistress of his heart; thrown off to serve the turn of Giuliano and his younger friends ; or improvised, half jestingly, to meet the humour of his princely patron, when Lorenzo, quitting the laurel-crowned bust of Plato, or the groves of Careggi, or the audience-chamber where he parleyed with the envoys of the Sforza, went abroad like King Manfred of old with lute and mandoline and viol to serenade the windows of some facile beauty in the twilight of a night of June.[1] Little did Poliziano dream that his

[1] 'La notte esceva per Barletta (rè Manfredi) cantando strambotti e canzoni, che iva pigliando lo frisco, e con isso ivano due musici Siciliani ch' erano gran romanzatori.' M. Spinello, in *Scr. Rer. Ital.* vii Spinello's Chronicles are, however, probably a sixteenth-century forgery.

learning would pass away almost unreckoned, but that men of after time would gather the honey of the golden days of the Renaissance from these wilding garlands.[1] Yet, however slightly Poliziano may have prized these productions of his early manhood, he proved that the *Canzone*, the *Rispetto*, and the *Ballata* were as much his own in all their multiformity of lyric loveliness, as were the rich sonorous measures of the octave stanza. Expressing severally the depths of tender emotion, the caprices of adoring passion, and the rhythmic sentiment that winds in myriad movements of the dance, these three kinds of poem already belonged to the people and to love. Poliziano displayed his inborn taste and mastery of art in nothing more than in the ease with which he preserved the passionate simplicity of the Tuscan *Volkslied*, while giving it a place among the lyrics of the learned. We have already seen how that had been achieved by Boccaccio and Sacchetti, and afterwards in a measure by Lorenzo de' Medici. But the problem of writing love-poetry for the people in their own forms, without irony and inuendo, was not now so easy as it had been in the fourteenth century, when no barrier had yet arisen between educated poets and the folk. Nor had even Boccaccio, far less Lorenzo, solved it with the exquisite tact and purity of style we find in all Poliziano's

[1] A letter addressed by Poliziano to Lorenzo in 1488 from Acquapendente justifies the belief that the cultivation of popular poetry had become a kind of pastime in the Medicean circle. He says: 'Yesterday we set off for Viterbo. We are all gay, and make good cheer, and all along the road we whet our wits at furbishing up some song or May-day ditty, which here in Acquapendente with their Roman costume seem to me more fanciful than those at home.' See Del Lungo's edition of the *Prose Volgari*, etc., p. 75.

verses. In order to comprehend their charm, we must transfer ourselves to Florence on a summer night, when the prince is abroad upon the streets attended by singing-boys as beautiful as Sandro's angels. The professor's chair is forgotten, and Plato's spheres are left to turn unheeded. Pulci and Poliziano join hands with girls from the workshop and the attic. Lorenzo and Pico figure in the dance with prentice-lads and carvers of wood-work or marble. All through the night beneath the stars the music of their lutes is ringing; and when the dancing stops, they gather round some balcony, or hold their own upon the square in matches of improvised melody with the unknown rhymesters of the people. What can be prettier than the ballad of roses made for 'such a night' by Angelo Poliziano?[1]

Poliziano's *Rispetti* are written for the most part in *ottava rima*. This form alone suffices to mark them out as literary reproductions of the poetry upon which they are modelled. In the *Rispetti* more than the *Ballate* we notice a certain want of *naïveté*, which distinguishes them from the racier inspirations of the popular Muse. That passionate insight into the soul and essence of emotion which rarely fails the peasant in his verse however rude, is here replaced by *concetti* rounded into pearls of fancy with the daintiest art. Those brusque and vehement images that flash the light of imagination on the movements of the heart, throbbing with intensest natural feeling, yield to carefully selected metaphors developed with a strict sense

[1] See above, p. 378. For translations of several *Ballate* by Poliziano I may refer to my *Sketches and Studies in Italy*, pp. 190–225.

of economy. Instead of the young *contadino* willing to mortgage Paradise for his *dama*, worshipping her with body, will and soul, compelling the morning and the evening star and the lilies of the field and the bells that swing their notes of warning over Rome, to serve the bidding of his passion, we have the scholar-courtier, who touches love with the finger-tips for pastime, and who imitates the gold of the heart with baser metal of fine rhetoric. Still we find in these *Rispetti* a quality which their rustic models lack. This is the roseate fluency and honeyed rapture of their author—an exquisite limpidity and ease of diction that reveal the inborn gift of art. Language in Poliziano's hand is plastic, taking form like softest wax, so that no effort of composition, no labour of the file can be discerned.

Nec pluteum cædit nec demorsos sapit ungues.

This line of Persius denotes the excellences no less than the faults of his erotic poetry, so charming in its flow, so fit to please a facile ear, so powerless to stir the depth of the soul or wring relenting from reluctant hearts. Compared with the love-poetry of elder poets, these *Rispetti* are what the artificial epigrams of Callimachus or the Anacreontics of the Alexandrian versifiers were to the ardent stanzas of Sappho, the impassioned scolia of Pindar. While they fail to reflect the ingenuous emotions of youth exulting in the Paradise of love without an afterthought, they no less fail to embody philosophy or chivalrous religion or the tragedy of passions in con-

flict. They are inspired by Aphrodité Pandemos, and the joys of which they tell are carnal.[1]

What has been said about the detached *Rispetti*, is true of those longer poems which consist of many octave stanzas strung together with a continuity of pleading rhetoric. The facility bordering on negligence of their construction is apparent. Verses that occur in one, reappear in others without alteration. All repeat the same arguments, the same enticements to a less than lawful love. The code of Florentine wooing may be conveniently studied in their rambling paragraphs, while the levity of their declarations and the fluency of their vows, doing the same service on different occasions, show them to be 'false as dicers' oaths,' mere verses of the moment, made to sway a yielding woman's heart.[2] Yet who can help enjoying them, when he connects their effusiveness of fervent language with the episodes of the *Novelle*, illustrated by figures borrowed from contemporary frescoes? Those sinewy lads of Signorelli and Masuccio, in parti-coloured hose and tight jackets, climbing mulberry-tree or vine beneath their lady's window; those girls with the demure eyes of Lippo Lippi and Bandello, suspending rope-ladders from balconies to let their Romeo escape at daybreak; those lovers rushing, half clad in shirt or jerkin, from bower and bedchamber to cross their swords with jealous husbands at

[1] For translations of detached *Rispetti*, see my *Sketches and Studies in Italy*, p. 197.

[2] I have translated one long *Rispetto Continuato* or *Lettera in Istrambotti*; see *Sketches and Studies in Italy*, pp. 198–201. It is probable that Poliziano wrote these love-poems for his young friends, which may excuse the frequent repetitions of the same thoughts and phrases.

street corners; rise before us and sing their love-songs in these verses of Poliziano, written for precisely such occasions to express the very feelings of these heroes of romance. After all, too, there is a certain sort of momentary sincerity in their light words of love.

Three lyrics of higher artistic intention and of very different calibre mark the zenith of Poliziano's achievement. These are the portrait of the country girl, *La brunettina mia*; the canzone to *La Bella Simonetta*, written for Giuliano de' Medici; and the magnificent imitation of Petrarch's manner, beginning *Monti, valli, antri e colli.*[1] They are three studies in pictorial poetry, transparent, limpid, of incomparable freshness. A woman has sat for the central figure of each, and the landscape round her is painted with the delicacy of a *quattrocento* Florentine. *La brunettina* is the simple village beauty, who bathes her face in the fountain, and crowns her blond hair with a wreath of wild flowers. She is a blossoming branch of thorn in spring. Her breasts are May roses, her lips are strawberries. The portrait is so ethereally tinted and so firmly modelled that we seem to be looking at a study painted by a lover from the life. Simonetta moves with nobler grace and a diviner majesty[2]:

[1] In Carducci's edition, pp. 342, 355, 363. The first seems to me untranslatable. The second and third are translated by me in *Sketches and Studies, etc.*, pp. 202–207.

[2] But she who gives my soul sorrow and mirth,
Seemed Pallas in her gait, and in her face
Venus; for every grace
And beauty of the world in her combined.
Merely to think, far more to tell my mind,
Of that most wondrous sight, confoundeth me;
For mid the maidens she

In lei sola raccolto
Era quant' è d' onesto e bello al mondo.

. . . . . .

Un' altra sia tra le belle la prima :
Costei non prima chiamesi, ma sola ;
Chè 'l giglio e la viola
Cedono e gli altri fior tutti alla rosa.
Pendevon dalla testa luminosa
Scherzando per la fronte e suoi crin d' oro,
Mentre ella nel bel coro
Movea ristretti al suono e dolci passi.

She is the lady of the *Stanze*, whom Giuliano found among the fields that April morning[1] :

Candida è ella, e candida la vesta,
Ma pur di rose e fior dipinta e d' erba ;
Lo inanellato crin dall' aurea testa
Scende in la fronte umilmente superba.

Who most resembled her was found most rare.
Call ye another first among the fair ;
Not first, but sole before my lady set :
Lily and violet
And all the flowers below the rose must bow.
Down from her royal head and lustrous brow
The golden curls fell sportively unpent.
While through the choir she went
With feet well lessoned to the rhythmic sound.

[1] White is the maid, and white the robe around her,
With buds and roses and thin grasses pied ;
Enwreathéd folds of golden tresses crowned her,
Shadowing her forehead fair with modest pride :
The wild wood smiled ; the thicket, where he found her,
To ease his anguish, bloomed on every side :
Serene she sits, with gesture queenly mild,
And with her brow tempers the tempests wild.

. . . . . .

Reclined he found her on the swarded grass
In jocund mood ; and garlands she had made
Of every flower that in the meadow was,
Or on her robe of many hues displayed ;
But when she saw the youth before her pass,
Raising her timid head awhile she stayed ;
Then with her white hand gathered up her dress,
And stood, lap full of flowers, in loveliness.

Ridegli attorno tutta la foresta,
E quanto può sue cure disacerba,
Nell' atto regalmente è mansueta;
E pur col ciglio le tempeste acqueta.

. . . . . .

Ell' era assisa sopra la verdura
Allegra, e ghirlandetta avea contesta
Di quanti fior creasse mai natura,
De' quali era dipinta la sua vesta.
E come prima al giovan pose cura,
Alquanto paurosa alzò la testa;
Poi con la bianca man ripreso il lembo,
Levossi in piè con di fior pieno un grembo.

All the defined idealism, the sweetness and the purity of Tuscan portraiture are in these stanzas. Simonetta does not pass by with a salutation in a mist of spiritual glory like Beatrice. She is surrounded with no flames of sensual desire like the Griseida of Boccaccio. She sits for her portrait in a tranquil light, or moves across the canvas with the dignity of a great lady :

Lei fuor di guisa umana
Mosse con maestà l' andar celeste,
E con man sospendea l' ornata veste
Regale in atto e portamento altero.

It was a rare and fugitive moment in the history of art when Poliziano could paint La Simonetta in these verses, and Lippo Lippi showed her likeness on cathedral walls of Prato. Different models of feminine beauty, different ideals of womanly grace served the painters and poets of a more developed age; Titian's Flora and Dosso Dossi's Circe illustrating the Alcina of Ariosto and the women of Guarini. Once more, it is the thought of Simonetta which pervades the landscape of the third canzone I have mentioned.

Herself is absent; but, as in a lyric of Petrarch, her spirit is felt, and we are made to see her throned beneath the gnarled beech-branches or dipping her foot in the too happy rivulet. Something just short of perfection in the *staccato* exclamations of the final strophe reminds us of Poliziano's most serious defect. Amid so much tenderness of natural feeling, he fails to make us believe in the reality of his emotion. Not passion, not thought, but the refined sensuousness of a nature keenly alive to plastic beauty, educated in the schools of classical and Florentine art, and gifted with inexhaustible facility of language, is the dominant quality of Poliziano's Italian poetry. The same quality is found in his Latin and Greek verse—in the plaintive elegies for La Bella Simonetta and Albiera degli Albizzi, in the *Violæ* and in that ode *In puellam suam*,[1] which is the Latin sister of *La brunettina*. The *Sylvæ* add a new element of earnestness to his style; for if Poliziano felt deep and passionate emotion, it was for Homer, Virgil and the poets praised in the *Nutricia*, while the *Rusticus* condenses in one picture of marvellous fullness the outgoings of genuine emotion stimulated by his love of the country.

> Hanc, o cœlicolæ magni, concedite vitam !
> Sic mihi delicias, sic blandimenta laborum,
> Sic faciles date semper opes ; hac improba sunto
> Vota tenus. Nunquam certe, nunquam illa precabor,
> Splendeat ut rutilo frons invidiosa galero,
> Tergeminaque gravis surgat mihi mitra corona.

That is the heart-felt prayer of Poliziano. Give

[1] Praised for their incomparable sweetness by Scaliger, and translated into softest Italian by Firenzuola.

me the tranquil scholar's life among the pleasures of the fields; my books for serious thought in studious hours; the woods and fields for recreation; with moderate wealth well-gotten without toil; no bishop's mitre or triple tiara to vex my brows. It is the same ideal as Alberti's. From this background of the modest rural life emerge three splendid visions—the Golden Age, when all was plenitude and peace; Orpheus of the dulcet lyre, evoking harmony from discord in man's jarring life; and Venus rising from the waves to bless the world with beauty felt through art. Such was the programme of human life sketched by the representative mind of his century, in an age when the Italians were summoned to do battle with France, Germany and Spain invasive of their borders.

Poliziano died before the great catastrophe. He sank at the meridian of his fame, in the same month nearly as Pico, two years later than Lorenzo, a little earlier than Ficino, in the year 1494, so fatal to his country, the date that marks the boundary between two ages in Italian history.

CHAPTER VII.

PULCI AND BOIARDO.

The Romantic Epic—Its Plebeian Origin—The Popular Poet's Standpoint—The Pulci Family—The Carolingian Cycle—Turpin—*Chanson de Roland*—Historical Basis—Growth of the Myth of Roland—Causes of its Popularity in Italy—Burlesque Elements—The *Morgante Maggiore*—Adventures in Paynimry—Roncesvalles—Episodes introduced by the Poet—Sources in older Poems—The Treason of Gano—Pulci's Characters—His Artistic Purpose—His Levity and Humour—Margutte—Astarotte—Pulci's *bourgeois* Spirit—Boiardo—His Life—Feudalism in Italy—Boiardo's Humour—His Enthusiasm for Knighthood—His Relation to Renaissance Art—Plot of the *Orlando Innamorato*—Angelica—Mechanism of the Poem—Creation of Characters—Orlando and Rinaldo—Ruggiero—Lesser Heroes—The Women—Love—Friendship—Courtesy—Orlando and Agricane at Albracca—Natural Delineation of Passions—Speed of Narration—Style of Versification—Classical and Medieval Legends—The Punishment of Rinaldo—The Tale of Narcissus—Treatment of Mythology—Treatment of Magic—Fate of the *Orlando Innamorato*.

LORENZO DE' MEDICI and Angelo Poliziano reunited the two currents of Italian literature, plebeian and cultivated, by giving the form of refined art to popular lyrics of divers kinds, to the rustic idyll, and to the sacred drama. Another member of the Medicean circle, Luigi Pulci, aided the same work of restoration by taking up the rude tales of the *Cantori da Piazza* and producing the first romantic poem of the Renaissance.

Of all the numerous forms of literature, three seem to have been specially adapted to the Italians of this period. They were the *Novella*, the Romantic Epic,

and the Idyll. With regard to the *Novella* and the Idyll, it is enough in this place to say that we may reckon them indigenous to modern Italy. They suited the temper of the people and the age; the *Novella* furnishing the fit artistic vehicle for Italian realism and objectivity; the Idyll presenting a point of contact with the literature of antiquity, and expressing that calm sensibility to natural beauty which was so marked a feature of the national character amid the distractions of the sixteenth century. The Idyll and the *Novella* formed, moreover, the most precious portion of Boccaccio's legacy.

Concerning the Romantic Epic it is necessary to speak at greater length. At first sight the material of the Carolingian Cycle, which formed the basis of the most considerable narrative poems of the Renaissance, seems uncongenial to the Italians. Feudalism had never taken a firm hold on the country. Chivalry was more a pastime of the upper classes, more consciously artificial than it had been in France or even England. The interest of the Italians in the Crusades was rather commercial than religious, and the people were not stirred to their centre by the impulse to recover the Holy Sepulchre. The enthusiasm of piety which animated the Northern myth of Charlemagne, was not characteristic of the race that earlier than the rest of Europe had indulged in speculative scepticism and sarcastic raillery; nor were the marvels of the legend congenial to their positive and practical imagination, turned ever to the beauties of the plastic arts. Charlemagne, again, was not a national hero. It seemed as though the great foreign epics, which had been trans-

ported into Italy during the thirteenth century, would find no permanent place in Southern literature after the close of the fourteenth. The cultivated classes in their eagerness to discover and appropriate the ancient authors lost sight of peer and paladin. Even Boccaccio alluded contemptuously to chivalrous romance, as fit reading only for idle women; and when he attempted an epical poem in octave stanzas, he chose a tale of ancient Greece. Still in spite of these apparent drawbacks, in spite of learned scorn and polished indifference, the Carolingian Cycle had taken a firm hold upon the popular fancy. We have seen how a special class of literary craftsmen reproduced its principal episodes in prose and verse for the multitudes gathered on the squares to hear their recitations, or for readers in the workshop and the country farm. Now, in the renascence of the native literature, poets of the highest rank were destined to receive the same material from the people and to give it a form appropriate to their own culture. This fact must not be forgotten by the student of Pulci, Boiardo, Berni, and Ariosto. The romantic epics of the golden age had a plebeian origin; and the masters of verse who devoted their best energies to that brilliant series of poems, were dealing with legends which had taken shape in the imagination of the people, before they applied their own inventive faculties to the task of beautifying them with art unrivalled for splendour and variety of fancy. This, and this alone, explains the anomalies of the Italian romantic epic—the mixture of burlesque with seriousness, the irony and sarcasm alternating with gravity and pathos, the wealth of

comic episodes, the interweaving of extraneous incidents, the antithesis between the professed importance of the subject-matter and the spirit of the poet who plays with it as though he felt its puerility—all the startling contrasts, in a word, which have made this glittering Harlequin of art in the Renaissance so puzzling to modern critics. If we remember that the poets of the sixteenth century adopted their subjects from the people, finding them already impregnated with the plebeian instincts of *improvisatori*, who felt no real sympathy with knighthood, and whose one aim was to amuse and gratify an audience eager for excitement; if we further recollect that these poets approached their own task in the same spirit, adding yet another element of irony proper to men who stood aloof and laughed, and who desired to entertain the Courts of Italy with masterpieces of humour and fantastic beauty; we shall succeed in comprehending the peculiarities of their productions.

The romances of Orlando must be regarded as works of pure art, wrought by courtly singers from a previously existing popular literature, which in its turn had been fashioned from the Frankish legends to suit the tastes of a non-chivalrous, but humorous and marvel-loving multitude. In passing from the Song of Roland or Turpin's Chronicle to the *Orlando Furioso* we can trace two separate processes of transmutation. By the earlier process the *materia di Francia* was adapted to the Italian people; by the second the new material thus obtained was reconstructed for the Italian Courts. The final product is a masterpiece of refined art, retaining something of the French

originals, something of the popular Italian *rifacimento*, but superadding the wisdom, the irony, and the poetry of one of the world's brightest geniuses. We might compare the growth of a romantic epic of the sixteenth century to the art of Calimala, whereby the rough stuffs of Flanders were wrought at Florence into finer cloths, and the finished fabric was tinted with the choicest dyes, and made fit for a king's chamber.

Hitherto I have spoken as though Pulci, Boiardo, Ariosto, Berni, and the lesser writers of romantic epics could be classed together in one sentence. The justification of so broad a treatment at the outset lies in this, that their relation to the popular romances they rehandled was substantially the same. But it will be the special purpose of the following pages to point out their essential differences, not only as poets, but also with regard to the spirit in which they viewed their common subject-matter.

Boccaccio, in his desire to fuse the classic and the medieval modes of thought and style, not merely adapted the periods of Latin to Italian prose, but also sought to treat an antique subject in the popular measure of the octave stanza. His *Teseide* is a narrative poem in which the Greek hero plays a prominent part, while all the chiefs of Theban and Athenian legend are brought upon the scene. Yet the main motive is a tale of love, and the language is as modern as need be. Writing to please the mistress of his heart, and emulous of epic fame, Boccaccio rejected the usual apostrophes and envoys of the *Cantori da Banca*, and constructed a poem divided into books. Poliziano approached the problem of fusing the antique and

modern from a different point of view. He adorned a courtly theme of his own day with phrases and decorative details borrowed from the classic authors, presenting in a series of brilliant pictures an epitome of ancient art. It remained for Pulci to develop, without classical admixture, the elements of poetry existing in the popular Italian romances. The *Morgante Maggiore* is therefore more thoroughly and purely Tuscan than any work of equal magnitude that had preceded it. This is its great merit, and this gives it a place apart among the hybrid productions of the Renaissance.

The Pulci were a noble family, reduced in circumstances and attached to the Casa Medici by ties of political and domestic dependency. Bernardo, the eldest of three brothers, distinguished himself in literature by his translations of Virgil's Eclogues, by his elegies on Cosimo de' Medici, by a *Sacra Rappresentazione* on the tale of Barlaam, and by a poem on the Passion of Christ which he composed at the instance of a devout nun. Luca wrote the stanzas on the Tournament of Lorenzo de' Medici above mentioned,[1] and took some part at least in the composition of an obscure poem called the *Ciriffo Calvaneo*.[2] But the most famous of the brothers was Luigi, whose correspon-

[1] See p. 406.

[2] This poem relates the adventures of Ciriffo and Il Povero Avveduto, bastards of two noble ladies, and gives the history of a crusade of Louis against the Soldan of Egypt. It was published as the work, as far as the first Book, of Luca Pulci, completed and restored by Bernardo Giambullari. 'Il Ciriffo Calvaneo, diviso in iv Canti, col primo Libro di Luca Pulci, ed il resto riformato per Bernardo Giambullari' (Roma, Mazzocchio, 1514). Luigi Pulci claims a share in it, if not the whole, in the *Morgante*, xxviii. 118, 129.

dence with Lorenzo de' Medici proves him to have been a kind of Court-poet in the Palace of the Via Larga, while the sonnets he exchanged with Matteo Franco breathe Burchiello's plebeian spirit.[1] He had a wild fantastic temperament, inclining to bold speculations on religious topics; tinctured with curiosity that took the form of magic art; bizarre in expression, yet withal so purely Florentine that his prose and verse are a precious mine of *quattrocento* idioms gathered from the jargon of the streets and squares. Of humanistic culture he seems to have possessed but little. Still the terms of familiar intercourse on which he lived with Angelo Poliziano, Matteo Palmieri, and Paolo Toscanelli enabled him to gather much of the learning then in vogue. The theological and scientific speculations of the age are transmitted to us in his comic stanzas with a vernacular raciness that renders them doubly precious.[2]

Before engaging with the *Morgante Maggiore*, it is needful to enquire into the source of this and all the other Italian romantic poems, and to account for the fact that they were confined, so far as their subject

[1] See *Lettere di Luigi Pulci a Lorenzo Il Magnifico*, Lucca, Giusti, 1868. *Sonetti di Matteo Franco e Luigi Pulci*, 1759. The sonnets are indescribably scurrilous, charged with Florentine slang, and loaded with the filthiest abuse. The point of humour is that Franco and Pulci undertook (it is said, for fun) to heap scandals on each other's heads, ransacking the language of the people for its vilest terms of invective. If they began in joke, they ended in earnest; and Lorenzo de' Medici, who had a low taste for buffoonery, enjoyed the scuffle of his Court-fools. It was a combat of humanists transferred from the arena of the schools to the market-place, where two men of parts degraded themselves by assuming the character of coal-heavers.

[2] The poetical talents of the Pulci family were hereditary. Cellini tells us of a Luigi of that name who improvised upon the market-place of Florence.

went, within the circle of the Carolingian epic. In 1122 a prose history in monkish Latin, purporting to be the Chronicle of the last years of the reign of Charles the Great written by Turpin, Archbishop of Rheims, was admitted among the canonical books by Calixtus II., who in his Bull cursed those who should thenceforward listen to the 'lying songs of Jongleurs.' This Chronicle was merely a sanctimonious and prosaic version of the Songs of Roland and of Roncesvalles.[1] The object of the scribe who compiled it, and of the Pope who canonised it, was to give an ecclesiastical complexion to the martial chants which already possessed the ear of the public.[2] Accordingly, while he left untouched the tales of magic, the monstrous marvels and the unchristian ethics of the elder fable, this pseudo-Turpin interspersed prayers, confessions, vows, miracles, homilies, and pulpit admonitions. In order to secure verisimilitude for his narrative, he reversed the old account of Roncesvalles, according to which Turpin perished on the field, anathematised all previous poets, and pretended that his Chronicle was written by the hands of the Archbishop.[3] What he effected for the Song of Roland, Geoffrey of Monmouth did, without a sacerdotal bias, for the romance of Arthur.

[1] Turpin's Chronicle consists of thirty-two chapters, relating the wars of Charlemain with the Spanish Moors, the treason of Ganelon, and Roland's death in Roncesvalles. The pagan knight, Ferraguto, and the Christian peers are mentioned by name, proving that at the date of its compilation the whole Carolingian myth was tolerably perfect in the popular imagination.

[2] It has been conjectured by M. Génin, editor of the *Chant de Roland*, not without substantial grounds, that Gui de Bourgogne, bishop of Vienne, afterwards Pope Calixtus II., was himself the pseudo-Turpin.

[3] See *Chanson de Roland*, line 804, and compare *Morg. Magg.* xxvii. 79.

We possess a MS. of the *Chanson de Roland* in Norman French. It was discovered in the Bodleian Library and published first in 1837 by M. Michel, afterwards in 1851 by M. Génin. The date of the MS. has been fixed by some critics as early as the eleventh, by others as late as the thirteenth, century. Purporting to be the work of one Turold, its most enthusiastic admirers claim it as the genuine production of Théroulde, tutor to William the Conqueror, which, after passing through the hands of Taillefer, the knightly bard of Senlac field, was deposited in his MS. chest by a second Théroulde, abbot of Peterborough.[1] Be that as it may, we can assume that the Bodleian MS. presents the ancient battle-song in nearly the same form as when the Normans followed Taillefer at Hastings, and heard him chanting of 'Charlemain and Roland and Oliver who died in Roncesvalles.' This song reverberated throughout medieval Europe. Poggio in the *Facetiæ* compares a man who weeps over the fall of Rome, to one who in Milan shed tears over Roland's death at Roncesvalles. Dante may have heard it on the lips of the *Cantores Francigenarum* in Lombard towns, or in the halls of Fosdinovo above the Tyrrhene Sea; for he writes with an energy of style scarcely inspired by the pseudo-Turpin:

> Dopo la dolorosa rotta, quando
> Carlo Magno perdè la santa gesta,
> Non sonò si terribilmente Orlando.

Orlando and Oliver (or Ogier) are carved upon the façade of the Duomo at Verona—Dietrich's town of Bern,

[1] See Ludlow's *Popular Epics of the Middle Ages*, vol. i. p. 412, and M. Génin's Introduction to the *Chanson de Roland*, Paris, 1851.

where Northern traditions of chivalry long lingered.[1] Like the Spanish legend of the Cid, or the climax of the *Niebelungenlied*, this Song of Roland, in dignity and strength of style, in tragic heroism and passionate simplicity, is worthy to be ranked with a Canto of the *Iliad*. Like all medieval romantic poetry, it is but a fragment—the portion of a cycle never wrought by intervention of a Homer into epical completeness. But its superiority over Turpin's Chronicle in all the qualities that could inspire a singer, is immeasurable.

Two questions have now to be asked. What historical basis can be found for the Carolingian myth? and how did it happen that the Italians preferred this legend of French Paladins to any other of the feudal romances? The history of Charlemagne and his peers—of Roland, Oliver, Ogier, Turpin, Ganilo the traitor, Pinabel, Marsilius the Moorish king of Spain, and all the rest, of whom we read in the Norman Song, and who receive numerous additions from the Italian romancers—must not be sought in Eginhard. It is a Myth. But like all myths, it has some nucleus of reality, round which have crystallised the enthusiasms of a semi-barbarous age, the passionate memories of the people looking back to bygone greatness, the glowing fancies of poets intent on visions of the future. This nucleus of fact is little more than the name of

[1] See Génin (*op. cit.* pp. xxix., xxx) for the traces of the Roland myth in the Pyrenees, at Rolandseck, in England, and at Verona; also for gigantic statues in Germany called Rolands (*ib.* pp. xxi. xxii.). At Spello, a little town of Umbria between Assisi and Foligno, the people of the place showed me a dint in their ancient town wall, about breast-high, which passes for a mark made by Orlando's knee. There is learned tradition of a phallic monument named after Roland in that place; but I could find no trace of it in local memory.

Charles, the Frankish Emperor. All the legends of the cycle represent him as conducting a crusade, defeating the Saracens in mighty battles, besieged by them in Paris, betrayed by his own subject Ganilo, and bereft of his noblest paladins in the Pass of Roncesvalles. History knows nothing of these events. Nor can history account for the traditional character of the Emperor, who is feeble, credulous, browbeaten by lawless vassals, incapable of strenuous action, and yet respected as the conqueror of the world and the anointed of the Lord.[1] It is therefore clear that the myth has blent together divers incongruous elements, and that the spirit of the crusades has been at work, giving a kind of unity to scarce remembered acts of the chief of Christendom. We hear from Eginhard that Charlemagne in 778 advanced as far as Saragossa into Spain, and during his retreat had his rearguard cut off by the Basques.[2] Among the slain was 'Roland, prefect of the Breton Marches.' We read again in Eginhard (anno 824) how Louis le Debonair lost two of his counts, who were returning from Spain through the Pass of Roncesvalles. Furthermore, the Merovingian Chronicles tell us of a Pyrenean battle in the days of Dagobert, when twelve Frankish chiefs were surrounded in those passes and slain. These are sufficient data to account for the Pass of Roncesvalles becoming a valley dolorous, the vale of the great woe. For

[1] The *Song of Roland* does not give this portrait of Charlemagne's dotage. But it is an integral part of the Italian romances, a fixed point in all *rifacimenti* of the pseudo-Turpin.

[2] Ludlow (*op. cit.* i. 358) translates the Basque Song of Atta-biçar, which relates to some destruction of chivalrous forces by the Pyrenean mountaineers.

the crusading exploits of Charlemagne we have to look to his predecessor, Charles Martel, who defeated the Saracens at Tours and stemmed the tide of Mussulman invasion. His successors, the feeble monarchs of the Frankish line, several of whom bore the name of Charles, explain the transformation of the Emperor into a vacillating monarch, infirm of purpose and incapable of keeping his peers in order; for the distinguishing surnames of history are later additions, and Chronicles, though written, were not popularly read. The bard, therefore, mixed his materials without care for criticism, and the myth produced a hybrid Charlemagne composed of many royal Karls. As for the traitor Gano, we hear of Lupus, Duke of Gascony, who dealt treasonably with Charlemagne, and of one Ganilo, Ganelon, or Wenelon, Archbishop of Sens, who played the same part toward Charles the Bald in 864.[1] This portion of the myth may possibly be referred to these dim facts. Yet it would be wiser not to insist upon them; for the endeavour to rationalise an entire legend is always hazardous, and it is enough to say that a traitor was needed for the fight of Roncesvalles no less than Mordred for the death of Arthur in the plain of Glastonbury. To explain the legendary siege of Paris by the Saracens, so important an incident in the Italian romances, it has been ingeniously remarked that, though the Moors never menaced the French capital, the Normans did so repeatedly, while both Saracens and Normans were Pagans.[2] It may also

[1] See Génin (*op. cit.* pp. xxv–xxviii.).

[2] Introduction to Panizzi's edition of the *Orlando Innamorato* and *Orlando Furioso* (London, Pickering, 1830), vol. i. pp. 126–128.

be remembered that Saracens had pillaged Rome, and that Saracen forays were a common incident of Italian experience. The gathering of great armies from the far East and the incursions of hideous barbarian hordes, which form an integral element of Boiardo's and Ariosto's scheme, can be referred to the memory of Tartar, Hun, and Turk; while the episodes of Christian knights enamoured of Pagan damsels are incidents drawn from actual history in the intercourse of Italy with the Levant. Allowing for this slight framework of fact, but not pressing even the few points that have been gathered by antiquarian research, it may be briefly said that the bulk of the Carolingian romance, with its numerous subordinate legends of knights and ladies, is purely mythical.

In the next place we have to consider what led the Italians to select the romances of Charlemagne for special development rather than those of Arthur, with which they were no less familiar.[1] We have seen that on the first introduction of the *materia di Francia* into Italy, the Arthurian Cycle became the property of the nobles, who found in it a mirror of the feudal manners they affected, whereas the people listened to *Chansons de Geste* upon the market-place.[2] When, therefore,

[1] See Dante, *Inf.* xxxii. 61, v. 67, v. 128. Galeotto, Lancelot's go-between with Guinevere, gave his name to a pimp in Italy, as Pandarus to a pander in England. Boccaccio's *Novelliere* was called *Il Principe Galeotto.* Petrarch in the *Trionfi* and Boccaccio in the *Amorosa Visione* make frequent references to the knights of the Round Table. The latter in his *Corbaccio* mentions the tale of Tristram as a favourite book with idle women. The *Fiammetta* might be quoted with the same object of proving its wide-spread popularity. The lyrics of Folgore da San Gemignano and other *trecentisti* would furnish many illustrative allusions.

[2] See above, p. 17.

the polite poets of the fifteenth century adopted the romantic epic from the popular rhymers, they found a mass of Carolingian tales in vogue, to which they had themselves from infancy been used. But this preference of the multitude for Charlemagne and Roland requires further explanation. It must be remarked in the first place that the Empire exercised a fascination over the Italians in the middle ages, paralleled by no other power except the Papacy. They regarded it as their own, as their glory in the past, as their pride in the future, if only the inheritor of the Cæsars would do his duty and rule the world from Rome with equal justice. The pedigree of the Christian Emperors from Constantine to Charles the Great formed an integral part of the Carolingian romance as it took form in Italy.[1] It was something for the Italians that Charles had been crowned at Rome, a ceremony from time to time repeated by his German successors during the centuries which made his legend famous. Nor, though the people were but little influenced by the crusading fanaticism, was it of no importance that in the person of this Emperor Christendom had been imperilled by the infidels, and Christendom through him had triumphed. The Chronicle of Turpin, again, had received authoritative sanction. Add to it as the romancers chose, attribute nonsense to the Archbishop as they pleased, they always relied, in show at least, on his canonical

[1] The *Reali di Francia* sets forth this legendary genealogy at great length, and stops short at the coronation of Charles in Rome and the discovery of Roland. Considering the dryness of its subject-matter, it is significant that this should have survived all the prose romances of the fifteenth century. We may ascribe the fact perhaps to the tenacious Italian devotion to the Imperial idea.

veracity. Pulci, Bello, Boiardo, and Ariosto appeal to his authority with mock seriousness; and even the burlesque Berni, while turning Turpin into ridicule, adopts the style:

> Perchè egli era Arcivescovo, bisogna
> Credergli, ancor che dica la menzogna.[1]

The fashion lasted till the days of Folengo and Fortiguerra. It may further be mentioned that Orlando at an early date had been made a Roman by the popular Italian mythologists. They said that he was born at Sutri, and that Oliver was the son of the Roman prefect for the Pope. The sentiment of the people for this strange *Senator Romanus* expressed itself touchingly and pithily in his supposed epitaph: 'One God, One Rome, One Roland.'[2] Orlando was so rooted in the popular consciousness as a hero, that to have substituted for him another epical character would have been impossible.

When we further investigate the naturalisation of Orlando in Italy, we find that all the romantic poems written on his legend inclined to the burlesque. The chivalrous element of love which pervades the Arthurian Cycle, had been extracted and treated after their own

[1] *Orl. Inn. Rifac.* i. 18, 26. Niccolò da Padova in the thirteenth century quoted Turpin as his authority for the history of Charlemagne which he composed in Northern French. This proves the antiquity of the custom. See Bartoli, *Storia della Lett. It.* vol. ii. p. 44. To believe in Turpin was not, however, an article of faith. Thus Bello in the *Mambriano*, c. viii.:

> Ma poi che 'l non è articolo di fede,
> Tenete quella parte che vi piace,
> Che l' autor libramente vel concede.

[2] 'Un Dio, uno Orlando, e una Roma.' *Morg. Magg.* xxvii. 220. Compare this with Arthur's 'Flos regum Arthurus, rex quondam rexque futurus.'

fashion by the lyrists of the fourteenth century. That was no immediate concern of the people, nor had the citizens any sympathy with the chivalry of arms. To deal as solemnly with medieval romance as the Northern bards had done, was quite beside the purpose of the *improvisatori* who refashioned the *Chansons de Geste* for Italian townsfolk. When, therefore, Pulci undertook to amuse Lucrezia Tornabuoni, the mother of Lorenzo de' Medici, with a tale of Roland, he found his material already stripped of epical sobriety; nor was it hard for him to handle his theme in the spirit of Boccaccio, bent on exhausting every motive of amusement which it might suggest. He assumed the tone of a street-singer, opening each canto with the customary invocation to Madonna or a paraphrase of some Church collect, and dismissing his audience at the close with grateful thanks or brief good wishes. But Pulci was no mere *Cantastorie*. The popular style served but for a cloak to cover his subtle-witted satire and his mocking levity. Sarcastic Tuscan humour keeps up an *obbligato* accompaniment throughout the poem. Sometimes this humour is in harmony with the plebeian spirit of the old Italian romances; sometimes it turns aside and treats it as a theme of ridicule. In reading the *Morgante*, we must bear in mind that it was written, canto by canto, to be recited in the Palace of the Via Larga, at the table where Poliziano and Ficino gathered with Michelangelo Buonarroti and Cristoforo Landino. Whatever topics may from time to time have occupied that brilliant circle, were reflected in its stanzas; and this alone suffices to account for its tender episodes and its burlesque extravagances, for the satiric picture of

Margutte and the serious discourses of the devil Astarotte. The external looseness of construction and the intellectual unity of the poem, are both attributable to these circumstances. Passing by rapid transitions from grave to gay, from pathos to cynicism, from theological speculations to ribaldry, it is at one and the same time a mirror of the popular taste which suggested the form, and also of the courtly wits who listened to it laughing. The *Morgante* is no *naïve* production of a simple age, but the artistic plaything of a cultivated and critical society, entertaining its leisure with old-world stories, accepting some for their beauty's sake in seriousness, and turning others into nonsense for pure mirth.

A careful study of the *Morgante Maggiore* reveals to the critic three separate strains of style. To begin with, it is clear that we are dealing with two poems fused in one—the first ending with the twenty-third canto, the second consisting of the last five cantos. Between these two divisions a considerable period of time is supposed to have elapsed. The first poem consists of a series of romantic adventures in strange countries, whither Orlando, Uliviero, Rinaldo and Astolfo have been driven by the craft of Gano, and where they fight giants, liberate ladies, and fall in love with Pagan damsels, after the jovial fashion of knights errant. The second assumes a more heroic tone, and tells in truly thrilling verse the tale of Roncesvalles. But over and above this double material, different in matter and in manner, we trace throughout the whole romance a third element, which seems to be more essentially the poet's own than either his fantastic tissue of adventures or his serious narrative of Roland's death.

This third element consists of half-ironical half-sober dissertations, reflective digressions, and brilliant interpolated incidents, among which we have to reckon the splendid episodes of Astarotte and Margutte. So much was clear to my mind when I first read the *Morgante*, and attempted to comprehend the difficulties it presented to critics like Ginguené and Hallam. Since then the truth of this view has been substantiated by the eminent Italian scholar, Pio Rajna, who has proved that the *Morgante* is the *rifacimento* of two earlier popular poems, the first existing in MS. in the Laurentian library, the second entitled *La Spagna*.[1] Pulci availed himself freely of his popular models, at times repeating the old stanzas with no alteration, but oftener rehandling them and adding to their comic spirit, and interpolating passages of his own invention. Since the two originals differed in character, his *rifacimento* retained their divers peculiarities, notwithstanding those master-touches which betray the same hand in both of its main sections. But the most precious part of the poem remains Pulci's own. Nothing can deprive him of Margutte and Astarotte; nor without his clever transmutation of the old material would the bulk of the *Morgante Maggiore* deserve more attention than many similar romances buried in condign oblivion. Between the two parts we may notice a considerable difference of literary merit. The second and shorter is by far the finer in poetic quality, earnestness, and power of treatment. The first is tedious to read. The second enthralls and carries us along.[2]

[1] See *Propugnatore* (Anni ii., iii., iv.). *La Spagna* was itself two popular compilations.

[2] This is only strictly true of Cantos xxiv., xxv., xxvi., xxvii. The last

The poem takes its title from the comic hero Morgante, a giant captured and converted by Orlando in the first Canto.[1] He dies, however, in the twentieth, and the narrative proceeds with no interruption. If we seek for epical unity, in a romance so loosely put together from so many divers sources, we can find it in the treason of Gano. The action turns decisively and frequently upon this single point, returns to it from time to time for fresh motives, and reaches its conclusion in the execution of the traitor after the great deed of crime has been accomplished in the valley dolorous. An Italian of the fifteenth century could not have chosen a motive more suited to the temper and experience of his age, when conspiracies like that of the Pazzi at Florence and the Baglioni at Perugia were frightfully frequent, and when the successful massacre of Sinigaglia made Cesare Borgia the hero of historical romance. *Il tradimento, il traditore*, the kiss of Judas, the simile of the fox, recur with fatal resonance through all the Cantos of the poem. The style assumes a rugged grandeur of tragic realism, not unworthy of poets of the stamp of our own Webster or Marston, in the passage which describes the tempest by the well at Saragossa, where Gano met Marsilio to plan their fraud, and where the locust-tree let fall its fruit upon

Canto, in fact the whole poem after the execution of Marsilio, is a dull historical epitome, brightened by Pulci's personal explanations at the ending.

[1] It is called *Morgante Maggiore* because the part relating to him was published separately under the title of *Morgante*. This character Pulci derived from the MS. poem called by Signor Rajna the *Orlando* to distinguish it. In the year 1500 we find one of the Baglioni called Morgante, which proves perhaps the popularity of this giant.

the traitor's head.[1] The *Morgante* is, in truth, the epic of treason, and the character of Gano, as an accomplished yet not utterly abandoned Judas, is admirably sustained throughout. The powerful impression of his perversity is heightened by contrast with the loyalty of his son Baldovino. In the fight at Roncesvalles Baldovino carries a mantle given to Gano by the Saracen king, without knowing for what purpose his father made him wear it; and wherever he charges through the press of men, the foes avoid him. Orlando learns that he is protected by this ensign of fraud, and accuses him of partaking in Gano's treason. Then the youth flings the cloak from his shoulders, and plunges into the fight with an indignant repudiation of this shame upon his lips. The scene is not unworthy of the *Iliad*;[2] and his last words, as he falls

[1] Canto xxv. 73–78. The locust-tree, according to the tradition of the South, served Judas when he hanged himself. Northern fancy reserved this honour for the elder, not perhaps without a poetic sense of the outcast existence of the plant and its worthlessness for any practical use. On the same locust-tree Marsilio was afterwards suspended (c. xxvii. 267). The description of the blasted pleasure-garden in the latter passage is also very striking. For the translation of these passages see Appendix.

[2] xxvii. 5–7 and 47. Note in particular (translated in Appendix):

Rispose Baldovin: Se il padre mio
Ci ha qui condotti come traditore,
S' io posso oggi campar, pel nostro Iddio,
Con questa spada passeròggli il core!
Ma traditore, Orlando, non son io,
Ch' io t' ho seguito con perfetto amore;
Non mi potresti dir maggiore ingiuria!
Poi si stracciò la vesta con gran furia,
E disse: Io tornerò nella battaglia,
Poi che tu m' hai per traditore scorto;
Io non son traditor, se Dio mi vaglia,
Non mi vedrai più oggi se non morto!
E inverso l' oste de' Pagan si scaglia,
Dicendo sempre: Tu m' hai fatto torto!
Orlando si pentea d' aver ciò detto
Chè disperato vide il giovinetto.

pierced in the breast with two lances, *Or non son io più traditore!* are dramatic.

Pulci deserves credit for strong delineation of character. Through all the apish tricks and fantastic arabesque-work of his style, the chief personages retain firmly-marked types. Never since the *Chanson de Roland* was first sung, has a more heroic portrait of Orlando, the God-fearing knight, obedient to his liege-lord, serene in his courage and gentle in his strength, courteous, pious and affectionate, been painted.[1] Close adherence to the popular conception of Orlando's character here stood Pulci in good stead; nor was he hampered with the difficulties which beset Boiardo and Ariosto, when they showed the champion of Christianity subdued to madness and to love. Thus one work at least of the Renaissance maintained for the Italians an ideal of chivalrous heroism, first conceived by Franco-Norman bards, and afterwards transmitted through the fancy of the people, who are ever ready to discern and to preserve the lineaments of greatness. Oliver the true friend and doughty warrior, Rinaldo the fiery foe and reckless lover, to whom the press of men was Paradise,[2] and Malagigi the magician, are drawn with no less skill. Charles is such as the traditions of the myth and the requirements of the plot

[1] Of all the Paladins only Orlando is uniformly courteous to Charlemagne. When Rinaldo dethrones the Emperor and flies to his cousin (c. xi. 114), Orlando makes him return to his obedience (*ib.* 127). See, too, c. xxv. 100:

Or oltre in Roncisvalle Orlando va,
Per obbedir, com' e' fe' sempre, Carlo.

[2] xxvi. 126:

Rinaldo, quando e' fu nella battaglia,
Gli parve esser in ciel tra' cherubini
Tra suoni e canti.

obliged Pulci to make him. Yet in spite of the feebleness which exposes him to the treasonable arts of Gano, he is not deficient in a certain nobility. In the conduct of these characters, amid the windings of the poet's freakish fancy, we trace the solidity of his plan, his faculty for earnest art. But should there still be found critics who, after a careful study of Gano, Orlando, Uliviero, Rinaldo and Carlo, think that Pulci meant his poem for a mere burlesque, this opinion cannot but be shaken by a perusal of the twenty-fifth, twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh Cantos. The refusal of Orlando to blow his horn:

> Non sonerò perchè e' m' aiuti Carlo,
> Chè per viltà mai non volli sonarlo:

his address to the knights when rushing into desperate battle at impossible odds[1]; the scene of his death, so tender in its pathos, so quaint in its piety; the agony of Charles when he comes, too late, to find him slain, and receives his sword from the Paladin's dead hands; these passages must surely be enough to convince the most incredulous of doctrinaires.

It has been customary to explain the apparent contradictions of the *Morgante Maggiore*—Pulci's

[1] Canto xxvi. 24–39. These two touches, out of many that are noble, might be chosen:

> Stasera in paradiso cenerete;
> Come disse quel Greco anticamente
> Lieto a' suoi già, ma disse—Nello inferno:

and:

> La morte è da temere, o la partita,
> Quando l' anima e 'l corpo muore insieme;
> Ma se da cosa finita a infinita
> Si va qui in ciel fra tante diademe,
> Questo è cambiar la vita a miglior vita.

brusque transitions from piety to ribaldry, from pathos to satire—by reference to the circumstances of Florence at the date of its composition. The republic was at war with Sixtus IV., who had taken part in the Pazzi conspiracy. To his Bull of excommunication the Signoria had retorted by terming it 'maledictam maledictionem damnatissimi judicis,' and had described the Pope himself as 'delirum senem,' 'leno matris suæ, adulterorum minister, diaboli vicarius.' It was not to be expected that even an orthodox Christian should be tender toward the vices of the clergy or careful in guarding his religious utterances at such a moment. Yet we need not go far afield to account for Pulci's profanity. The Italians of the age in which he lived, were freethinkers without ceasing to be Catholics. To begin a Canto with a prayer, and to end it with speculations on the destiny of the soul after death, was consistent with their intellectual temper. The schools and private coteries of Florence were the arena in which Platonism and Averroism waged war with orthodoxy, where questions of free-will and creation, the relation of man to God, and the essence of the human spirit, were being discussed with a philosophic indifference and warmth of curiosity that prepared the way for Pomponazzi's materialism. Criticism, the modern Hercules, was already in its cradle, strangling the serpents of sacerdotal authority: and as yet the Inquisition had not become a power of terror; the Council of Trent and the Spanish tyranny had not turned Italians into trembling bigots or sleek hypocrites. Externally they remained tenacious of their old beliefs; and from the point of view of art at least,

they were desirous of adhering to tradition. For Pulci to have celebrated Orlando without assuming the customary style of the *cantastorie*, would have been beside his purpose. Therefore, the mixture of magic, theology, impiety, speculation and religious fervour which perplexes a reader of the present day in the *Morgante*, corresponded to the mental attitude of the educated majority at Pulci's date. On the borderland between the middle ages and the modern world the keen Italian intellect loved to entertain itself with a perpetual *perhaps*, impartially including in the sphere of doubt old dogmas and novel hypotheses, and finding satisfaction in an insecurity that flattered it with the sense of disengagement from formulæ.[1] With some minds this volatile questioning was serious; with others it assumed a Rabelaisian joviality. Pulci ranked with those who made the problems of the world material for humorous debate.

A few instances of Pulci's peculiar levity might be selected from the last Cantos of the *Morgante*, where no one can maintain that his intention was burlesque. We have just heard from the minstrel's lips how Roland died, recommending his soul to God and delivering his glove in sign of feudal fealty to Gabriel. The sound of his horn has startled Charlemagne from the

[1] This pervasive doubt finds its noblest and deepest expression in some lines spoken by Orlando just before engaging in the fight at Roncesvalles (xxvi. 31):

> Tutte cose mortal vanno ad un segno;
> Mentre l' una sormonta, un' altra cade:
> Così fia forse di Cristianitade.

This is said not from the hero's but the author's point of view. Pomponazzi afterwards gave philosophical utterance to the same disbelief in the permanence of Christianity.

sleep of false tranquillity, and the Emperor is on his way to Roncesvalles. But time is short. He prays Christ that as of old for Joshua, so now for him in his sore need, the sun may be stayed and the day be prolonged [1] :

O crucifisso, il qual, già sendo in croce,
Oscurasti quel sol contra natura ;
Io ti priego, Signor, con umil voce
Infin ch' io giunga in quella valle oscura,
Che tu raffreni il suo corso veloce.

The prayer is worthy, in its solemn tone, of this exordium ; and the desired effect soon follows. But now Pulci changes his note from grave to gay [2] :

E disse : Pazienzia, come Giobbe ;
Or oltre in Roncisvalle andar si vuole.
Chè come savio il partito conobbe,
Per non tenere in disagio più il sole.

A few lines further he describes the carnage in the dolorous valley, and finds this comic phrase to express the confusion of the field [3] :

Chi mostra sanguinosa la percossa,
Chi il capo avea quattro braccia discosto,
Da non trovarli in Giusaffà si tosto.

Pulci's grotesque humour gives an air of false absurdity to many incidents which, together with his hearers, he undoubtedly took in good faith. During the slaughter of the Christians he wishes to impress the audience with the multitude of souls who crowded into Paradise. S. Peter is tired to death with opening the door for them and deafened with their jubilations [4] :

[1] Canto xxvii. 172. [2] *Ibid.* 196. [3] *Ibid.* 198.
[4] Canto xxvi. 91.

E così in ciel si faceva apparecchio
D' ambrosia e nettar con celeste manna,
E perchè Pietro alla porta è pur vecchio,
Credo che molto quel giorno s' affanna ;
E converrà ch' egli abbi buono orecchio,
Tanto gridavan quelle anime Osanna
Ch' eran portate dagli angeli in cielo ;
Sicchè la barba gli sudava e 'l pelo.

In the same spirit is the picture of the fiends seated like hawks upon the bell-towers of a little chapel, waiting to pounce upon the souls of Pagans.[1]

Sometimes a flash of purely Berniesque humour appears in Pulci ; as when he says that the Saracens :

Bestemmiavano Dio divotamente,

or when Oliver, after a pathetic love-lament, complains that it is impossible :

Celar per certo l' amore e la tossa.

According to modern notions his jokes not unfrequently savour of profanity. Rinaldo and Ricciardetto are feasting upon ortolans, and give this punning reason for their excellence[2] :

Cioè che Cristo a Maddalena apparve
In ortolan, che buon sozio gli parve.

On the same occasion Rinaldo is so pleased with his fare that he exclaims :

Questi mi paion miracoli ;
Facciam qui sei non che tre tabernacoli.

Such expressions flash forth from mere Florentine sense of fun in passages by no means deliberately comic.

[1] Canto xxvi. 89. [2] Canto xxv. 217, 218.

The most diverting character of the *Morgante* is Margutte, an eccentric heteroclite creature, the prototype of Folengo's Cingar and Rabelais' Panurge, whom the giant met upon his wanderings and adopted for a comrade. It has been supposed with some reason that Pulci here intended to satirise the Greeks who flocked to Florence after the fall of Constantinople, and that either Marullo, the personal enemy of Poliziano, or Demetrius Chalcondylas, his rival in erudition, sat for Margutte's portrait. The character of the rogue, described by himself in thirty stanzas of fantastic humour, contains a complete epitome of the abuse which the scholars of those days used to vomit forth in their reciprocal invectives.[1] Part of the comic effect produced by his speech is due to this self-attribution of qualities which supplied the arsenals of humanistic combatants with poisoned arrows. But Margutte has far more than a merely illustrative or temporary value. He is the first finished humoristic portrait sketched in modern literature, the first broadly-conceived and jovially-executed Rabelaisian study. Though it is very improbable that Pulci had any knowledge of Aristophanes, though he died eight years or thereabouts before the Curé of Meudon was born, his Margutte is cousin-german of the Sausage-seller and Panurge.[2] Margutte takes an impish pride in reckoning up his villanies and vices. When

[1] Canto xviii. 114, *et seq.*

[2] I have placed in the Appendix a rough plaster cast rather than a true copy of Margutte's admirable comic autobiography. My stanzas cannot pretend to exactitude of rendering or interpretation. The *Morgante* has hitherto been very imperfectly edited ; and there are many passages in this speech which would, I believe, puzzle a good Florentine scholar, and which, it is probable, I have misread.

Morgante asks him whether he believes in Christ or Appollino, he replies:

A dirtel tosto,
Io non credo più al nero ch' all' azzurro,
Ma nel cappone, o lesso, o vuogli arrosto . . .
E credo nella torta e nel tortello,
L' una è la madre, e l' altro è il suo figliuolo;
Il vero paternostro è il fegatello,
E possono esser tre, e due, ed un solo,
E diriva dal fegato almen quello.

He explains his disengagement from all creeds by referring to his parentage:

Che nato son d' una monaca greca,
E d' un papasso in Bursia là in Turchia.

Beginning life by murdering his father, he next set out to seek adventures in the world:

E per compagni ne menai con meco
Tutt' i peccati o di turco o di greco,
Anzi quanti ne son giù nell' inferno:
Io n' ho settanta e sette de' mortali,
Che non mi lascian mai la state o 'l verno;
Pensa quanti io n' ho poi de' veniali!

Margutte's humour consists in the baboon-like self-contentment of his infamous confessions, and in the effect they produce upon Morgante, who feels that he has found in him a finished gentleman. After amusing his audience with this puppet for a while, Pulci flings him aside. Margutte, like Pietro Aretino, dies at last of immoderate laughter.[1]

Another of Pulci's own creations is Astarotte, the proud and courteous fiend, summoned by Malagigi to bring Rinaldo from Egypt to Roncesvalles. This

[1] Canto xix. 148.

feat he accomplishes in a few hours by entering the body of the horse Baiardo. The journey consists of a series of splendid leaps, across lakes, rivers, mountains, seas and cities; and when the paladin hungers, Astarotte spreads a table for him in the wilderness or introduces him invisible into the company of queens at banquet in fair Saragossa. The humour and the fancy of this magic journey are both of a high order.[1] Yet Astarotte is made to serve a second purpose. Into his mouth Pulci places all his theological speculations, and makes him reason learnedly like Mephistophilis:

> Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
> Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute.

He is introduced in these lines[2]:

> Uno spirto chiamato è Astarotte,
> Molto savio, terribil, molto fero,
> Questo si sta giù nell' infernal grotte;
> Non è spirto folletto, egli è più nero.

Of his noble descent from the highest of created intelligences Astarotte is well aware[3]:

> Io era Serafin de' principali . . .
> Io fui già Serafin più di te degno.

He is in earnest to prove that courtesy exists in Hell[4]:

[1] Cantos xxv. xxvi.

[2] xxv. 119. This distinction between the fallen angels an the *spiriti folletti* deserves to be noticed. The latter were light and tricksy spirits, on whom not even a magician could depend. Marsilio sent two of them in a magic mirror to Charlemagne (xxv. 92), and Astarotte warned Malagigi expressly against their vanity (xxv. 160, 161). Fairies, *feux follets*, and the lying spirits of modern spiritualists seem to be of this family. Translations from Astarotte's dialogue will be found in the Appendix.

[3] xxv. 159, 208.

[4] xxv. 161; xxvi. 83.

Chè gentilezza è bene anche in inferno . . .
Non creder, nello inferno anche fra noi
Gentilezza non sia.

When Malagigi questions him concerning divine foreknowledge and his own state in Hell, he replies with a complete theory of sin and punishment founded upon the doctrine of freewill.[1] The angels sinned with knowledge. Therefore for them there is no redemption. Adam sinned in ignorance. Therefore there is hope for all men, and a probability of final restitution for the whole human race[2]:

Forse che 'l vero dopo lungo errore
Adorerete tutti di concordia,
E troverete ognun misericordia.

Astarotte's own torment in Hell causes him bitter anguish; but he recognises the justice of God, and knowing that the sentence of damnation cannot be cancelled, he is too courageous to complain. When Rinaldo offers to intercede for him, he answers[3]:

Il buon volere accetto;
Per noi fien sempre perdute le chiavi,
Maestà lesa, infinito è il difetto:
O felici Cristian, voi par che lavi
Una lacrima sol col pugno al petto,
E dir; Signor, tibi soli peccavi;
Noi peccammo una volta, e in sempiterno
Rilegati siam tutti nello inferno.
Chè pur se dopo un milione e mille
Di secol noi sperassim rivedere
Di quell' Amor le minime faville,
Ancor sarebbe ogni peso leggiere:
Ma che bisogna far queste postille?
Se non si può, non si debbe volere;
Ond' io ti priego, che tu sia contento
Che noi mutiamo altro ragionamento.

[1] Canto xxv. 141–158; translation in Appendix.
[2] *Ibid.* 233. [3] *Ibid.* 284.

There is great refinement in this momentary sadness of Astarotte, followed by his return to more cheerful topics. He is the Italian counterpart of Marlowe's fiend, that melancholy demon of the North, who tempts his victim by the fascination of mere horror.[1] Like Mephistophilis, again, Astarotte is ready to satisfy the curiosity of mortals, and condescends to amuse them with elfish tricks.[2] He explains to Rinaldo that it is quite a mistake to suppose that there are no inhabited lands beyond the Straits of Gibraltar. The earth, he says, is round, and can be circumnavigated; and cities full of people, worshipping our planets and our sun, are found in the antipodes. Hercules ought to blush for having fixed his pillars where he did.[3] The good understanding established between

[1] *Doctor Faustus*, act i. Scene with Mephistophilis in a Franciscan's habit.

[2] The scene in the banquet-hall at Saragossa (xxv. 292–305) is very similar to some of the burlesque scenes in *Doctor Faustus*.

[3] xxv. 228–231. Astarotte's discourses upon theology and physical geography are so learned that this part of the *Morgante* was by Tasso ascribed to Ficino. It is not improbable that Pulci derived some of the ideas from Ficino, but the style is entirely his own. The sonnets he exchanged with Franco prove, moreover, that he was familiar with the treatment of grave themes in a burlesque style. In acknowledging the help of Poliziano he is quite frank (xxv. 115–117, 169; xxviii. 138–149). What that help exactly was, we do not know. But there is nothing whatever to justify the tradition that Poliziano was the real author of the *Morgante*. Probably he directed Pulci's reading; and I think it not impossible, judging by one line in Canto xxv. (stanza 115, line 4), that he directed Pulci's attention to the second of the two poems out of which the narrative was wrought. If we were to ascribe all the passages in the *Morgante* that display curious knowledge to Pulci's friends, we might claim the discourse on the antipodes for Toscanelli and the debates on the angelic nature for Palmieri. Such criticism is, however, far-fetched and laboriously hypothetical. Pulci lived in an intellectual atmosphere highly charged with speculation of all kinds, and his poem reflected the opinion of his age. His own methods of composition and the relation in which he stood to other poets of the age are explained in two passages

Astarotte and Rinaldo on their journey is one of the prettiest incidents of this strange poem. When they part, the fiend and the paladin have become firm friends. Astarotte vows henceforth to serve Rinaldo for love; and Rinaldo promises to free him from Malagigi's power.[1]

Pulci dealt with the Carolingian Cycle in what may be termed a *bourgeois* spirit. Whether humorous or earnest, he maintained the tone of Florentine society; and his *Morgante* reflects the peculiar conditions of the Medicean circle at the date of its composition. The second great poem on the same group of legends, Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, transports us into a very different social and intellectual atmosphere. The highborn Count of Scandiano, reciting his cantos in the huge square castle surrounded by its moat, which still survives to speak of medieval Italy in the midst of Ferrara, had but little in common with Luigi Pulci, whose Tuscan fun and satire amused the merchant-princes of the Via Larga. The value of the *Orlando Innamorato* for the student of Italian development is principally this, that it is the most purely chivalrous poem of the Renaissance. Composed before the

of the *Morgante* (xxv. 117, xxviii. 138–149), where he disclaims all share of humanistic erudition, and expresses his indifference to the solemn academies of the learned. See translation in Appendix.

[1] xxvi. 82–88. We may specially note these phrases:

Astarotte, e' mi duole
Il tuo partir, quanto fussi fratello;
E nell' inferno ti credo che sia
Gentilezza, amicizia e cortesia.

. . . .

Chè di servirti non mi fia fatica;
E basta solo Astarotte tu dica,
Ed io ti sentirò sin dello inferno.

French invasion, and while the classical Revival was still unaccomplished, we find in it an echo of an earlier semi-feudal civility. Unlike the other literary performances of that age, which were produced for the most part by professional humanists, it was the work of a nobleman to whom feats of arms and the chase were familiar, who disdained the common folk (*popolaccio*, *canaglia*, as he always calls them), and whose ideal both of life and of art was contained in this couplet[1]:

> E raccontare il pregio e 'l grande onore
> Che donan l' armi giunte con l' amore.

Matteo Maria Boiardo was almost an exact contemporary of Pulci. He was born about 1434 at his hereditary fief of Scandiano, a village seven miles from Reggio, at the foot of the Apennines, celebrated for its excellent vineyards. His mother was Lucia Strozzi, a member of the Ferrarese house, connected by descent with the Strozzi of Florence. At the age of twenty-eight he married Taddea Gonzaga, daughter of the Count of Novellara. He lived until 1494, when he died at the same time as Pico and Poliziano, in the year of Charles VIII.'s invasion, two years after the death of Lorenzo de' Medici, and four years before Ficino. These dates are not unimportant as fixing the exact epoch of Boiardo's literary activity. At the Court of Ferrara, where the Count of Scandiano enjoyed the friendship of Duke Borso and Duke Ercole, this bard of chivalry held a position worthy of his noble rank and his great talents. The princes of the House of Este employed him as ambassador in diplo-

[1] Book II. canto viii. 1. All references will be made to Panizzi's edition of the *Orlando Innamorato*, London, Pickering, 1830.

matic missions of high trust and honour. He also administered for them the government of Reggio and Modena, their two chief subject cities. As a ruler, he was celebrated for his clemency and for his indifference to legal formalities. An enemy, Panciroli, wrote of him: 'He was a man of excessive kindness, more fit for writing poems than for punishing crimes.' He is even reported to have held that no offence deserved capital punishment—an opinion which at that period could only have been seriously entertained in Italy, and which even there was strangely at variance with the temper of the petty tyrants. Well versed in Greek and Latin literature, he translated Herodotus, parts of Xenophon, the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius, and the *Ass* of Lucian into Italian. He also versified Lucian's *Timon* for the stage, and wrote Latin poems of fair merit. His lyrics addressed to Antonia Caprara prove that, like Lorenzo de' Medici, he was capable of following the path of Petrarch without falling into Petrarchistic mannerism.[1] But his literary fame depends less upon these minor works than on the *Orlando Innamorato*, a masterpiece of inventive genius, which furnished Ariosto with the theme of the *Orlando Furioso*. Without the *Innamorato* the *Furioso* is meaningless. The handling and structure of the romance, the characters of the heroes and heroines, the conception of Love and Arms as the double theme of

[1] *Sonetti e Canzone* [*sic*] *del poeta clarissimo Matteo Maria Boiardo Conte di Scandiano*, Milano, 1845. The descriptions of natural beauty, especially of daybreak and the morning star, of dewy meadows, and of flowers, in which these lyrics abound, are very charming and at all points worthy of the fresh delightful inspiration of Boiardo's epic verse. Nor are they deficient in metrical subtlety; notice especially the intricate rhyming structure of a long Canto, pp. 44-49.

romantic poetry, the interpolation of *novelle* in the manner of Boccaccio, and the magic machinery by which the poem is conducted, are due to the originality of Boiardo. Ariosto adopted his plot, continued the story where he left it, and brought it to a close; so that, taken together, both poems form one gigantic narrative, of about 100,000 lines, which has for its main subject the love and the marriage of Ruggiero and Bradamante, mythical progenitors of the Estensi. Yet because the style of Boiardo is rough and provincial, while that of Ariosto is by all consent 'divine,' Boiardo has been almost forgotten by posterity.

Chivalry at no time took firm root in Italy, where the first act of the Communes upon their achievement of independence had been to suppress feudalism by forcing the nobles to reside as burghers within their walls. The true centres of national vitality were the towns. Here the Latin race assimilated to itself the Teutonic elements which might, if left to flourish in the country, have given a different direction to Italian development. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the immense extension of mercantile activity, the formation of tyrannies, the secular importance of the Papacy, and the absorption of the cultivated classes in humanistic studies, removed the people ever further from feudal traditions. Even the new system of warfare, whereby the scions of noble families took pay from citizens and priests for the conduct of military enterprises, tended to destroy the stronghold of chivalrous feeling in a nation that grew to regard the profession of arms as another branch of commerce. Still Italy could not wholly separate herself from the

rest of Europe, and there remained provinces where a kind of semi-feudalism flourished. The most important of these undoubtedly was the kingdom of Naples, subject to alternate influence from France and Spain, and governed by monarchs at frequent warfare with their barons. The second was Ferrara, where the House of Este had maintained unbroken lordship from the period when still the Empire was a power in Italy. Here the ancient Lombard traditions of chivalry, the customs of the Marca Amorosa, and the literature of the troubadours still lingered.[1] Externally at least, the manners of the Court were feudal, however far removed its princes may have been in spirit from the ideal of knighthood. In Ferrara, therefore, more than in Florence and Venice, those cities of financiers and traders, could the romance of chivalry be seriously treated by a poet who admired the knightly virtues, and looked back upon the days of Arthur and of Roland as a golden age of honour, far removed but real. While the humanists of Florence indulged their fancy with dreams of Virgil's Saturnian reign, the baron of Ferrara refashioned a visionary world from the wrecks of old romance.[2]

Boiardo did not disdain to assume the style of a minstrel addressing his courtly audience with compliments and *congés* at the beginning and ending of each canto. The first opens with these words:

> Signori e cavalieri che v' adunati
> Per odir cose dilettose e nuove,
> State attenti, quieti, ed ascoltati
> La bella istoria che 'l mio canto muove.

[1] See above, p. 15.

[2] See the exordium to the second Book, where it appears that the gentle poet caressed a vain hope that the peace of Italy in the second half of the fifteenth century was destined to revive chivalry.

But his spirit is always knightly, and he refrains from the quaint pietism of Pulci's preambles. He is no mere jongleur or *Cantatore da Banca*, but a new Sir Tristram, celebrating in heroic verse the valorous deeds and amorous emotions of which he had himself partaken. Nor does he, like Ariosto, appear before us as a courtier accomplished in the arts of flattery, or as a man of letters anxious above all things to refine his style. Neither the Court-life of Italy nor the humanism of the revival had destroyed in him the spirit of old-world freedom and noble courtesy. At the same time he was so far imbued with the culture of the Renaissance as to appreciate the value of poetic unity and to combine certain elements of classic learning with the material of romance. Setting out with the aim of connecting all the Frankish legends in one poem, he made Orlando his hero; but he perceived that the element of love, which added so great a charm to the Arthurian Cycle, had hitherto been neglected by the minstrels of Charlemagne. He therefore resolved to tell a new tale of the mighty Roland; and the originality of his poem consisted in the fact that he treated the material of the *Chansons de Geste* in the spirit of the Breton legends.[1] Turpin, he asserts with a grave irony, had hidden away the secret of Orlando's love; but he will unfold the truth, believing that no knight was ever the less noble for his love. Accordingly the passion of Orlando for 'the fairest of her sex, Angelica,' like the wrath of Achilles in the *Iliad*, is the mainspring of Boiardo's poem. To

[1] See the opening of Book II. Canto xviii. where Boiardo compares the Courts of Arthur and of Charlemagne.

his genius we owe the creation of that fascinating princess of the East, as well as the invention of the fountains of Cupid and Merlin, which cause the alternate loves and hates of his heroes and heroines—the whole of that closely-woven mesh of sentiment in which the adventures and the warlike achievements of Paladins and Saracens alike are involved.

In dealing with his subject Boiardo is serious—as serious, that is to say, as a writer of romance can be.[1] His belief in chivalry itself is earnest, though the presentation of knightly prowess runs into intentional extravagance. A dash of Italian merriment mingles with his enthusiasm; but he has none of Pulci's sceptical satiric humour, none of Ariosto's all-pervasive irony. The second thoughts of the burlesque poet or of the humorous philosopher do not cross the warp of his conception, and his exaggerations are romantic. Such a poem as the *Orlando Innamorato* could not have been planned or executed in Italy at any other period or under any other circumstances. A few years after Boiardo's death Italy was plunged into the wars that led to her enslavement. Charles V. was born and Luther was beginning to shake Germany. The forces of the Renaissance were in full operation, destroying the faiths and fervours of the medieval

[1] The acute and learned critic Pio Rajna, whose two massive works of scholarlike research, *I Reali di Francia* (Bologna, 1872), and *Le Fonti dell' Orlando Furioso* (Firenze, 1876), have thrown a flood of light upon Chivalrous Romance literature in Italy, is at pains to prove that the *Orlando Innamorato* contains a vein of conscious humour. See *Le Fonti* etc., pp. 24–27. I agree with him that Boiardo treated his subject playfully. But it must be remembered that he was far from wishing to indulge a secret sarcasm like Ariosto, or to make open fun of chivalry like Fortiguerra.

world, closing the old æon with laughter and lamentation, raising new ideals as yet imperfectly apprehended. Meanwhile Boiardo, whose life coincided with the final period of Italian independence, uttered the last note of the bygone age. His poem, chivalrous, free, joyous, with not one stain of Ariosto's servility or of Tasso's melancholy, corresponded to a brief and passing moment in the evolution of the national art. In the pure and vivid beauty which distinguish it, the sunset of chivalry and the sunrise of modern culture blend their colours, as in some far northern twilight of midsummer night. Joyousness pervades its cantos and is elemental to its inspiration—the joy of open nature, of sensual though steadfast love, of strong limbs and eventful living, of restless activity, of childlike security. Boiardo's style reminds us somewhat of Benozzo Gozzoli in painting, or of Piero di Cosimo, who used the skill of the Renaissance to express the cheerful *naïveté* of a less self-conscious time. It is sad to read the last stanza of the *Innamorato*, cut short ere it was half completed by the entry of the French into Italy, and to know that so free and freshly-tuned a 'native wood-note wild' would never sound again.[1] When Ariosto repieced the broken thread, the spirit of the times was changed. Servitude, adulation, irony, and the meridian splendour of Renaissance art had succeeded to independence, frankness, enthusiasm and the poetry of natural enjoyment. Far more magnificent is

[1] Mentre che io canto, o Dio redentore,
Vedo l' Italia tutta a fiamma e foco,
Per questi Galli, che con gran valore
Vengon, per disertar non so che loco.

Compare II. xxxi. 50; III. i. 2.

Ariosto's Muse; but we lack the spontaneity of the elder poet. And as the years advance, the change is more apparent toward decay. The genius of Boiardo might be compared to some high-born lad, bred in the country, pure-hearted, muscular, brave, fair to look upon. That of Ariosto is studious and accomplished with the smile of worldly sarcasm upon his lips. The elegances of Bembo and the Petrarchisti remind one of a hectic scented fop, emasculate and artificial. Aretino resembles his own *bardassonacci, paggi da taverna*, flaunting meretricious charms with brazen impudence. Tasso in the distance wears a hair shirt beneath his armour of parade; he is a Jesuit's pupil, crossing himself when he awakes from love-dreams and reveries of pleasure. It was probably the discord between Boiardo's spirit and the prevailing temper of the sixteenth century, far more than the roughness of his verse or the provinciality of his language, that caused him to be so strangely and completely forgotten. In the Italy of Machiavelli and the Borgias, of Michelangelo and Julius II., his aims, enthusiasms and artistic ideals found alike no sympathy. To class him with his own kind, we must go beyond the Alps and seek his brethren in France or England.

Boiardo's merit as a constructive artist can best be measured by the analysis of his plot. Crowded as the *Orlando Innamorato* is with incidents and episodes, and inexhaustible as may be the luxuriance of the poet's fancy, the unity of his romance is complete. From the moment of Angelica's appearance in the first canto, the whole action depends upon her movements. She withdraws the Paladins to Albracca, and forces

Charlemagne to bear the brunt of Marsilio's invasion alone. She restores Orlando to the French host before Montalbano. It is her ring which frees the fated Ruggiero from Atlante's charms. The nations of the earth are in motion. East, West, and South and North send forth their countless hordes to combat; but these vast forces are controlled by one woman's caprice, and events are so handled by the poet as to make the fate of myriads waver in the balance of her passions. We might compare Boiardo's romance to an immense web, in which a variety of scenes and figures are depicted by the constant addition of new threads. None of the old threads are wasted; not one is merely superfluous. If one is dropped for a moment and lost to sight, it reappears again. The slightest incidents lead to the gravest results. Narratives of widely different character are so interwoven as to aid each other, introducing fresh agents, combining these with those whom we have learned to know, but leaving the grand outlines of the main design untouched.

The miscellaneous details which enliven a tale of chivalry, are grouped round four chief centres—Paris, where the poem opens with the tournament that introduces Angelica, and where, at the end of the second book, all the actors are assembled for the supreme struggle between Christendom and Islam; Albracca, where Angelica is besieged in the far East; Biserta, where the hosts of pagan Agramante muster, and the hero Ruggiero is brought upon the scene; Montalbano, where Charlemagne sustains defeat at the hands of Agramante, Rodamonte, Marsilio, and Ruggiero. In order to combine such distant places in one action,

Boiardo was obliged to set geography and time at defiance. Between Tartary and Circassia, France and Spain, Africa and Hungary, the knights make marches and countermarches within the space of a few weeks or even days. All arrive at the same dangerous gates and passes, the same seductive lakes and gardens; for the magical machinery of the romance was more important to the poet's scheme than cosmographical conditions. His more than dramatic contempt for distance was indispensable in the conduct of a romance which admitted of no pause in the succession of attractive incidents, and was also pardonable in an age devoid of accurate geography. His chief aim was to secure novelty, excitement, variety, ideal unity.

Boiardo further showed his grasp of art by the emphatic presentation of the chief personages, whose action determined the salient features of his tale. It is impossible to forget Angelica after her first entrance on the scene at Paris. In like manner Marfisa at Albracca, Rodamonte in the council-chamber at Biserta, Ruggiero on the heights of Mount Carena, Orlando entering the combat before Albracca, Mandricardo passing forth unarmed and unattended to avenge his father's death, are brought so vividly before our eyes, that the earliest impression of each character remains with us in all their subsequent appearances. The inferior actors are introduced with less preparation and diminished emphasis, because they have to occupy subordinate positions, and to group themselves around the heroes; and thus the whole vast poem is like a piece of arras-work, where the strongest definition of form, and the most striking colours, serve to throw into relief the principal figures

amid a multitude of minor shapes. Not less skill is manifested in the preservation of the types of character outlined in these first descriptions. To vary the specific qualities of all those knights engaged in the same pursuit of love and arms, was extremely difficult. Yet Boiardo, sometimes working on the lines laid down by earlier romancers, sometimes inventing wholly new conceptions (as in the case of Rodamonte; Ruggiero, Marfisa, Brandiamante), may be said to have succeeded in this master-stroke of art. The Homeric heroes are scarcely less firmly and subtly differentiated than his champions of chivalry.

Orlando is the ideal of Christian knighthood, fearless, indifferent to wealth, chaste, religious, respectful in his love, courteous toward women, swift to wrath, but generous even in his rage, exerting his strength only when the occasion is worthy of him.[1] His one weakness is the passion for Angelica. Twice he refuses for her sake to accompany Dudone to the help of his liege lord, and in the fight at Montalbano he is careless of Christendom so long as he can win his lady.[2] Studying Boiardo's delineation of love-lunacy in Orlando, we understand how Ariosto was led by it to the conception of the *Furioso*. Rinaldo is cast in a somewhat inferior mould. Lion-hearted, fierce, rebellious against Charles, prone to love and hate excessively, he is the type of the feudal baron, turbulent and troublesome to his suzerain. Astolfo, slight, vain, garrulous, fond of finery and flirting, boastful, yet as fearless as the leopards on his

[1] Orlando was not handsome (II. iii. 63) :

avea folte le ciglia,
E l' un de gli occhi alquanto stralunava.

[2] See his prayer, II. xxix. 36, 37.

shield, and winning hearts by his courtesy and grace, offers a spirited contrast to the massive vigour of Rinaldo. It was a master-stroke of humour to have provided this fop of a Paladin with the lance of Argalia, whereby his physical weakness is supplemented and his bravery becomes a match for the muscles of the doughtiest champions.[1] Brandimarte presents another aspect of the chivalrous ideal. Fidelity is his chief virtue—loyalty to his love, Fiordelisa, and his hero, Orlando, combined with a delightful frankness and the freshness of untainted youth. He is not wise, but boyish, amorous, of a simple, trustful soul; a kind of Italian Sir Bors. Ferraguto, on the contrary, is all fire and fury, as petulantly fierce in love as in arms, so hot in his temerity that even at times he can forget the laws of honour.[2] Mandricardo's distinctive quality (beside that of generous daring, displayed in his solitary and unarmed quest of Orlando, and in the achievement of Hector's armour) is singular good fortune. Ruggiero has for his special mark victorious beauty, blent with a courtesy and loftiness of soul, that opens his heart to romantic love, and renders him peerless among youthful warriors. Boiardo has spared no pains to impress our imagination with the potency of his unrivalled comeliness.[3] He moves before our eyes like the angelic

[1] See the description of him in the tournament (I. ii. 63, iii. 4), when he saves the honour of Christendom to the surprise of everybody including himself. Again (I. vii. 45–65), when he defies and overthrows Gradasso, and liberates Charles from prison. The irony of both situations reveals a master's hand.

[2] For instance, when he attacks Argalia with his sword, contrary to stipulation, after being unhorsed by him (I. i. 71–73). The fury of Ferraguto in this scene is one of Boiardo's most brilliant episodes.

[3] His epithets are always *fiorito, fior di cortesia, di franchezza fiore*, etc. For the effect of his beauty, see II. xxi. 49, 50. The education of

knight in Mantegna's *Madonna of the Victory*, or like Giorgione's picture of the fair-haired and mail-clad donzel, born to conquer by the might of beauty. Agramante, the Eastern Emperor, whose council is composed of thirty-two crowned heads, enhances by his arrogance of youth the world-worn prudence of old Charlemagne. Marfisa, the Amazonian Indian queen, who has the force of twenty knights, and is as cruel in her courage as a famished tigress, sets off the gentler prowess of Brandiamante, Rinaldo's heroic sister. Rodamonte is the blustering, atheistic, insolent young Ajax, standing alone against armies, and hurling defiance at heaven from the midst of a sinking navy.[1] Agricane is distinguished as the knight who loves fighting for its own sake, and disdains culture; Sacripante, as the gentle and fearless suitor of Angelica; Gradasso, as the hyperbolical champion of the Orient, inflamed with a romantic desire to gain Durlindana and Baiardo, the enchanted sword and horse. Gano and Truffaldino, among these paragons of honour, are notable traitors, the one brave when he chooses to abandon craft, the other cowardly. Brunello is the Thersites of the company, a perfect thief, misshapen, mischievous, consummate in his guile.[2] Malagise deals in magic, and has a swarm of demons at his back for all exigences. Turpin's chivalry is tempered with a subtle flavour of

Ruggiero by Atalante was probably suggested to Boiardo by the tale of Cheiron and Achilles. See II. i. 74, 75.

[1] See II. i. 56, for Rodamonte's first appearance; for his atheism, II. iii. 22:

> Che sol il mio buon brando e l' armatura
> E la mazza, ch' io porto, e 'l destrier mio
> E l' animo, ch' io ho, sono il mio Dio.

[2] II. iii. 40.

the priest, exposing him to Boiardo's mockery. Of Oliver and Ogier we hear, accidentally perhaps, but little. Such are some of Boiardo's personages. Not a few were given to him by the old romancers; but these he has new-fashioned to his needs.[1] Others he has moulded from his own imagination with such plastic force that they fall short in no respect of the time-honoured standard. It is no slight tribute to his creative power that we recognise a real fraternity between these puppets of his fancy and the mythic heroes with whom they are associated. As Boiardo left the actors in his drama, so Ariosto took them up and with but slight change treated them in his continuation of the tale.

Women, with the exception of Marfisa and Brandiamante, fare but ill at Boiardo's hands. He seems to have conceived of female character as a compound of fickleness, infidelity, malice, falsehood, and light love. Angelica is little better than a seductive witch, who dotes on Rinaldo, and yet contrives to make use of Orlando, luring him to do her purpose by false promises.[2] Falerina and Dragontina are sorceresses, apt for all iniquity and guile. Morgana and Alcina display the capricious loves and inhuman spites of fairies. Origille is a subtle traitress, beautiful enough to deceive Orlando, but as poisonous as a serpent. Even the ladies who are intended to be amiable, show

[1] In Bello's *Mambriano*, for instance, we have a very lively picture of the amorous and vain Astolfo. Pulci supplies us with even a more impressive Orlando than Boiardo's hero, while his Amazonian heroines, Meridiana and Antea, are at least rough sketches for Marfisa. It was Boiardo's merit to have grasped these characters and drawn them with a fulness of minute detail that enhances their vitality.

[2] Her arts and their success are splendidly set forth, I. xxv. xxvi.

but a low standard of morality.[1] Leodilla, princess of the Far Isles, glories in adultery, and hates Orlando for his constancy to Angelica in absence.[2] Fiordelisa is false in thought to Brandimarte, when she sees Rinaldo sleeping in the twilight. The picture, however, of the slumbering warrior and the watchful maiden is so fresh and true to Boiardo's genius that it deserves quotation[3]:

Upon his steed forthwith hath sprung the knight,
And with the damsel rideth fast away;
Not far they fared, when slowly waned the light,
And forced them to dismount and there to stay.
Rinaldo neath a tree slept all the night;
Close at his side the lovely lady lay:
But the strong magic of wise Merlin's well
Had on the baron's temper cast a spell.

He now can sleep anigh that beauteous dame;
Nor of her neighbourhood have any care;
Erewhile a sea, a flood, a raging flame
Would not have stayed his quick desire, I swear:
To clasp so fair a creature without shame,
Walls, mountains, he'd have laid in ruins there;
Now side by side they sleep, and nought he recks;
While her, methinks, far other thoughts perplex.

The air, meanwhile, was growing bright around,
Although not yet the sun his face had shown;
Some stars the tranquil brows of heaven still crowned;
The birds upon the trees sang one by one:
Dark night had flown; bright day was not yet found:
Then toward Rinaldo turned the maid alone;
For she with morning light had cast off sleep,
While he upon the grass still slumbered deep.

[1] In proem to II. xii., Boiardo makes an excuse, imitated by Ariosto to his lady for this bad treatment of women.

[2] Leodilla's story is found in I. xxi. xxii. xxiv. 14–17, 44.

[3] I. iii. 47–50.

Beauteous he was, and but a stripling then ;
Strong-thewed and lithe, and with a lively face ;
Broad in the chest, but in the haunches thin ;
The lady gazed, smit with his manly grace :
His beard scarce budded upon cheek and chin :
Gazing, she almost fainted in that place,
And took such pleasure in so sweet a sight
That nought she heeds beyond this one delight.

Love, as conceived by Boiardo, though a powerful and steadfast passion, is not spiritual. The knights love like centaurs, and fight like bulls for the privilege of paying suit to their ladies. Rinaldo and Orlando meet in deadly duel for Angelica ; Rodamonte and Ferraguto dispute Doralice, though the latter does not care for her, and only asserts his right to dwell in thought upon her charms. Orlando and Agricane break their courteous discourse outside Albracca to fight till one of them is killed, merely because the name of Angelica has intervened. For Boiardo's descriptions of love returned, and crowned with full fruition, the reader may be referred to two magnificent passages in the episodes of Leodilla and Fiordelisa:[1] Poetically noble in spite of their indelicacy, these pictures of sensuous and natural enjoyment might be paralleled with the grand frankness of Venetian painting. It is to be regretted for Boiardo's credit as an artist in expression, that more than a bare reference to them is here impossible.

Boiardo's conception of friendship or fraternity in arms is finer. The delineation of affection generated by mutual courtesy under the most trying conditions of intercourse, which binds together the old rivals Iroldo and Prasildo, has something in it truly touching.[2]

[1] I. xxii. 24–27 ; I. xix. 60–65.

[2] I. xvii. 21, 22.

The same passion of comradeship finds noble expression in the stanzas uttered by Orlando, when he recognises Rinaldo's shield suspended by Aridano near Morgana's Lake.[1] It must be remembered that the cousins had recently parted as foes, after a fierce battle for Angelica before Albracca:

Hearing these dulcet words, the Count began
Little by little of his will to yield;
Backward already he withdrew a span,
When, gazing on the bridge and guarded field,
Force was that he the armour bright should scan
Which erst Rinaldo bore—broad sword and shield:
Then weeping, 'Who hath done me this despite?'
He cried: 'Oh, who hath slain my perfect knight?

'Here wast thou killed by foulest treachery
Of that false robber on this slippery bridge;
For all the world could not have conquered thee
In fair fight, front to front, and edge to edge:
Cousin, from heaven incline thine ear to me!
Where now thou reignest, list thy lord and liege!
Me who so loved thee, though my brief misprision,
Through too much love, wrought 'twixt our lives division.

'I crave thy pardon: pardon me, I pray,
If e'er I did thee wrong, sweet cousin mine!
I was thine ever, as I am alway,
Though false suspicion, or vain love malign,
And jealous blindness, on an evil day,
Brought me to cross my furious brand with thine:
Yet all the while I loved thee—love thee now;
Mine was the fault, and only mine, I vow.

'What traitorous wolf ravening for blood was he
Who thus debarred us twain from kind return
To concord sweet and sweet tranquillity,
Sweet kisses, and sweet tears of souls that yearn?
This is the anguish keen that conquers me,
That now I may not to thy bosom turn,
And speak, and beg for pardon, ere I part;
This is the grief, the dole that breaks my heart!'

[1] II. vii. 50.

Scarcely less beautiful is the feeling which binds Brandimarte to the great Count, the inferior to the superior hero, making him ready to release his master from Manodante's prison at the price of his own liberty.[1] Boiardo devotes the exordium of the seventh Canto of the third Book to a panegyric of chivalrous friendship:

Far more than health, far more than strength is worth,
Nay more than pleasure, more than honour vain,
Is friendship tried alike in dole and mirth:
For when one love doth join the hearts of twain,
Their woes are halved, their joys give double birth
To joy, by interchange of grief and pain;
And when doubts rise, with free and open heart
Each calls his friend, who gladly bears a part.

What profit is there in much pearls and gold,
Or power, or proud estate, or royal reign?
Lacking a friend, mere wealth is frosty cold:
He who loves not, and is not loved again,
From him true joys their perfect grace withhold:
And this I say, since now across the main
Brave Brandimarte drives his flying ship
To help Orlando, drawn by comradeship.

Next to bravery the poet's favourite virtue is courtesy. It is enough to mention Orlando's gentle forbearance with Agricane at Albracca, their evening conversation in the midst of a bloody duel, and the hero's sorrow when he has wounded his opponent to the death.[2] Of the same quality is the courteous behaviour of Rinaldo and Gradasso before a deadly encounter, the aid afforded to Marfisa by Rinaldo in the midst of their duel, and the graceful sympathy of Astolfo for Brandimarte, whom he has unhorsed.[3] But the two pas-

[1] II. xii. 14, *et seq.* [2] I. xvi. 36–44; xviii. 39–47; xix. 15, 16.
[3] I. v. 7–12; xix. 47; ix. 55–57.

sages which illustrate Boiardo's ideal of the chivalrous character, as blent of bravery and courtesy, of intelligence and love, are Orlando's discourse with Agricane and his speech to Morgana's maiden. In the first of these the Count and King have fought till nightfall. Then they agree to sleep together side by side, and to resume the combat at daybreak. Before they settle for the night, they talk[1]:

After the sun below the hills was laid,
And with bright stars the sky began to glow,
Unto the King these words Orlando said:
'What shall we do, now that the day is low?'
Then Agrican made answer, 'Make our bed
Together here, amid the herbs that grow;
And then to-morrow with the dawn of light
We can return and recommence the fight.'

No sooner said, than straight they were agreed:
Each tied his horse to trees that near them grew;
Then down they lay upon the grassy mead—
You might have thought they were old friends and true,
So close and careless couched they in the reed.
Orlando nigh unto the fountain drew,
And Agrican hard by the forest laid
His length beneath a mighty pine-tree's shade.

Herewith the twain began to hold debate
Of fitting things and meet for noble knights.
The Count looked up to heaven and cried, 'How great
And fair is yonder frame of glittering lights,
Which God, the mighty monarch, did create;
The silvery moon, and stars that gem our nights,
The light of day, yea, and the lustrous sun,
For us poor men God made them every one!'

But Agrican: 'Full well I apprehend
It is your wish toward faith our talk to turn:
Of science less than nought I comprehend;
Nay, when I was a boy, I would not learn,

[1] I. xviii. 39-47.

But broke my master's head to make amend
For his much prating ; no one since did yearn
To teach me book or writing, such the dread
Wherewith I filled them for my hardihead.

'And so I let my boyish days flow by,
In hunting, feats of arms, and horsemanship ;
Nor is it meet, meseems, for chivalry
To pore the livelong day on scholarship.
True knights should strive to prove their skill, say I,
And strength of limb in noble fellowship ;
Leave priests and teaching men from books to learn.
I know enough, thank God, to serve my turn.'

Then spake the Count : 'Thus far we both agree ;
Arms are the chief prime honour of a knight.
Yet knowledge brings no shame that I can see,
But rather fame, as fields with flowers are bright ;
More like an ox, a stock, a stone is he
Who never thinks of God's eternal light ;
Nor without learning can we rightly dwell
On his high majesty adorable.'

Then Agrican, 'Small courtesy it were,
War with advantage so complete to wage !
My nature I have laid before you bare ;
I know full well that you are learned and sage ;
Therefore to answer you I do not care.
Sleep if you like ; in sleep your soul assuage ;
Or if you choose with me to hold discourse,
I look for talk of love, and deeds of force.

'Now, I beseech you, answer me the truth
Of what I ask, upon a brave man's faith :
Are you the great Orlando, in good sooth,
Whose name and fame the whole world echoeth ?
Whence are you come, and why ? And since your youth
Were you by love enthralled ? For story saith
That any knight who loves not, though he seem
To sight alive, yet lives but in a dream.'

Then spake the Count : 'Orlando sure am I
Who both Almonte and his brother slew.
Imperious love hath lost me utterly,
And made me journey to strange lands and new ;

And, for I fain would thus in amity
Prolong discourse, therefore I tell you true,
She who now lies within Albracca's wall,
Gallafron's daughter, holds my heart in thrall.'

This unlucky mention of Angelica stirs the rage of Agricane, and the two men fight in the moonlight beneath the forest-trees till the young King is wounded to the death—a splendid subject for some imaginative painter's pencil. We may notice in this dialogue the modification of chivalry occasioned by Italian respect for culture. Boiardo exalts the courage of the educated gentleman above the valour of a man-at-arms. In the conversation between Orlando and Morgana's maiden he depicts another aspect of the knightly ideal. The fairy has made Orlando offer of inestimable treasures, but he answers that indifference to riches is the sign of a noble heart[1]:

Orlando smiling heard what she would say,
But scarce allowed her time her speech to end,
Seeing toward riches of the sort the fay
Proffered, his haughty soul he would not bend;
Wherefore he spake: 'It irked me not to-day
My very life unto the death to spend;
For only perils and great toils sustain
Honour of chivalry without a stain.

'But for the sake of gold or silver gear,
I would not once have drawn my brand so bright;
For he who holds mere gain of money dear
Hath set himself to labour infinite;
The more he gets the less his gains appear;
Nor can he ever sate his appetite;
They who most have, still care for more to spend,
Wherefore this way of life hath ne'er an end.'

Having seen the knights in their more generous

[1] I. xxv. 13, 14.

moments, we ought to bear in mind that they are capable of blustering, boasting, and exchanging foul abuse like humanists. One reference will suffice. Orlando and Rinaldo quarrel at Albracca and defy each other to combat. Before fighting they indulge in elaborate caricatures and vilifications, from which it would appear, to say the least, that these champions of Christendom were the subject of much scandalous gossip.[1]

Human nature, unsophisticated and unqualified, with the crude impulses and the contradictions proper to an unreflective age, has been studied by Boiardo for his men and women. His power of expressing the passions by natural signs might win for him the title of the Homer of Chivalry. The love lamentations of Prasildo, the love-languors of Angelica, the frenzy of Marfisa, the wrath of Ferraguto, the truculency of Rodamonte, the impish craft of Brunello, Origille's cunning, Brandimarte's fervour, Ruggiero's impatience to try his strength in the tournament, and his sudden ecstasy of love for Brandiamante—these and a hundred other instances of vigorous dramatic presentation could be mentioned. In his pictures of scenery and descriptions Boiardo follows nature no less faithfully—and this, be it remembered, in an age which refined on nature and admitted into art only certain chosen phases of her loveliness. Of affectation and elaboration he has none. The freshness of authentic vision gives peculiar vividness to the storm that overtakes Rodamonte in mid-channel; to the garden of Falerina, where Orlando stuffs his casque with roses in

[1] I. xxvii. 15–22: xxviii. 4–11.

order to stop his ears against a Siren's song; to the picture of Morgana combing Ziliante's hair in the midst of her enchanted meadows, and to the scene in which Angelica greets Orlando with a perfumed bath after the battle.[1] The charm of Boiardo's poetry consists in its firm grasp on truth and nature, the spontaneity and immediateness of its painting. He has none of Poliziano's richness, no Virgilian dignity or sweetness, no smooth and sparkling fluency like that of Ariosto. But all that he writes has in it the perfume of the soil, the freedom of the open air; the spirits of the woods and sea and stars are in it. Of his style the most striking merit is rapidity. Almost always unpolished, sometimes even coarse, but invariably spirited and masculine, his verse leaps onward like a greyhound in its swiftness. Story succeeds story with extraordinary speed; and whether of love or arms, they are equally well told. The pathetic novel of Tisbina, Rinaldo's wondrous combat with the griffins and the giants, the lion-hunt at Biserta, the mustering of Agramante's lieges, and the flux and reflux of battle before Montalbano tax the vivid and elastic vigour of Boiardo in five distinct species of rapid narration; and in all of them he proves himself more than adequate to the strain. For ornaments he cared but little, nor did he wait to elaborate similes. A lion at bay, a furious bull, a river foaming to the sea, a swollen torrent, two battling winds, a storm of hail, the clash of thunderclouds, an earthquake, are the figures he is apt to use. The descriptions of Rinaldo, Marfisa and Orlando, may be cited as favour-

[1] II. vi. 7–15, 28–42; II. iv. 24–39; II. xiii. 20–23; I. xxv. 38.

able specimens of his illustrative metaphors.[1] Short phrases like *a guisa di leone, a guisa di colomba, a guisa di serpente, a guisa d'uno drago, a guisa di castello,* indicate in outline images that aid the poet's thought. But nothing like the polish or minuteness of Ariosto's highly-wrought comparisons can be found in the *Innamorato.* Boiardo's study of the classics had not roused him to the emulation of their decorative beauties. Nor, again, did he attend to cadence in his versification. He would have wondered at the *limæ labor* of the poets who came after him. His own stanzas are forcible, swift, fiery, never pompous or voluptuous, liquid or sonorous. The changes wrought by Poliziano in the structure of *ottava rima,* his majesty and 'linked sweetness long drawn out,' were unknown to Boiardo. Yet those rugged octaves, in spite of their halting pauses at the end of the fifth line, in spite of their frequent repetitions and inequalities of volume, are better adapted to the spirit of his medieval subject-matter than the sumptuous splendour of more polished versifiers. His diction, in like manner, judged by the standard of the *cinque cento,* is far from choice—loaded with Lombardisms, gaining energy and vividness at the expense of refinement and precision. Thus style and spirit alike removed him from the sympathies of the correct and classic age that followed.

For the student of the earlier Renaissance Boiardo's art has one commanding point of interest. In the romantic treatment of antique motives he is unique. It was the aim of Italian poets after Boccaccio to effect

[1] I. xxiii. 38, 47 ; xxvi. 28.

a fusion between the classical and modern styles, and to engraft the beauties of antique literature upon their own language. Boiardo, far more a child of nature than either Boccaccio or Poliziano, with deeper sympathy for feudal traditions and chivalrous modes of feeling, attacked this problem from a point of view directly opposite to theirs. His comprehensive study of Greek and Roman authors had stored his mind with legends which gave an impulse to the freedom of his own imagination. He did not imitate the ancients; but used the myths with so much novelty and delicate perception of their charm, that beneath his touch they assumed a fresh and fascinating quality. There is nothing grotesque in his presentation of Hellenic fancy, nothing corresponding to the medieval transformation of deities into devils; and yet his spirit is not classical. His Sphinx, his Cyclops, and his Circe-Dragontina, his Medusa, his Pegasus, his Centaur, his Atalanta, his Satyr, are living creatures of romantic wonderland, with just enough of classic gracefulness to remove them from the murky atmosphere of medieval superstition into the serene ether of a neo-pagan mythology. Nothing can be more dissimilar from Ovid, more unlike the forms of Græco-Roman sculpture. With his firm grasp upon reality, Boiardo succeeded in naturalising these classic fancies. They are not copied, but drawn from the life of the poet's imagination. A good instance of this creative faculty is the description of the Faun, who haunts the woodland in the shade of leaves, and lives on fruits and drinks the stream, and weeps when the sky is fair, because he then fears bad weather, but laughs when it

rains, because he knows the sun will shine again.[1] It is not easy to find an exact analogue in the sister arts to this poetry, though some points in the work of Botticelli and Piero di Cosimo, some early engravings by Robeta and the Master of the Caduceus, some bas-reliefs of Amadeo or incrustations on the chapel-walls of S. Francesco at Rimini, a Circe by Dosso Dossi in the Borghese palace at Rome, an etching of Mantegna here or there, might be quoted in illustration of its spirit.[2] Better justice can be done to Boiardo's achievement by citation than by critical description. The following stanzas are a picture of Love attended by the Graces, punishing Rinaldo for his rudeness near the Fount of Merlin[3]:

When to the leafy wood his feet were brought,
Towards Merlin's Fount at once he took his way;
Unto the fount that changes amorous thought
Journeyed the Paladin without delay;
But a new sight, the which he had not sought,
Caused him upon the path his feet to stay.
Within the wood there is a little close
Full of pink flowers, and white, and various:

And in the midst thereof a naked boy,
Singing, took solace with surpassing cheer;
Three ladies round him, as around their joy,
Danced naked in the light so soft and clear.
No sword, no shield, hath been his wonted toy;
Brown are his eyes; yellow his curls appear;
His downy beard hath scarce begun to grow:
One saith 'tis there, and one might answer, No!

With violets, roses, flowers of every dye,
Baskets they filled and eke their beauteous hands:
Then as they dance in joy and amity,
The Lord of Montalbano near them stands:

[1] I. xxiii. 6.
[2] Burne Jones, in his *Pan and Syrinx*, offers a parallel.
[3] II. xv. 43 *et seq.*

Whereat, 'Behold the traitor!' loud they cry,
Soon as they mark the foe within their bands;
'Behold the thief, the scorner of delight,
Caught in the trap at last in sorry plight!'

Then with their baskets all with one consent
Upon Rinaldo like a tempest bore:
One flings red roses, one with violets blent
Showers lilies, hyacinths, fast as she can pour:
Each flower in falling with strange pain hath rent
His heart and pricked his marrow to the core,
Lighting a flame in every smitten part,
As though the flowers concealed a fiery dart.

The boy who, naked, coursed along the sod,
Emptied his basket first, and then began,
Wielding a long-grown leafy lily rod,
To scourge the helmet of the tortured man:
No aid Rinaldo found against the god,
But fell to earth as helpless children can;
The youth who saw him fallen, by the feet
Seized him, and dragged him through the meadow sweet.

And those three dames had each a garland rare
Of roses; one was red and one was white:
These from their snowy brows and foreheads fair
They tore in haste, to beat the writhing knight:
In vain he cried and raised his hands in prayer;
For still they struck till they were tired quite:
And round about him on the sward they went,
Nor ceased from striking till the morn was spent.

Nor massy cuirass, nor stout plate of steel,
Could yield defence against those bitter blows:
His flesh was swollen with many a livid weal
Beneath his mail, and with such fiery woes
Inflamed as spirits damned in hell may feel;
Yet theirs, upon my troth, are fainter throes:
Wherefore that Baron, sore, and scant of breath,
For pain and fear was well-nigh brought to death.

Nor whether they were gods or men he knew;
Nor prayer, nor courage, nor defence availed,
Till suddenly upon their shoulders grew
And budded wings with gleaming gold engrailed,

Radiant with crimson, white, and azure blue;
And with a living eye each plume was tailed,
Not like a peacock's or a bird's, but bright
And tender as a girl's with love's delight.

Then after small delay their flight they took,
And one by one soared upward to the sky,
Leaving Rinaldo sole beside the brook.
Full bitterly that Baron 'gan to cry,
For grief and dole so great his bosom shook
That still it seemed that he must surely die;
And in the end so fiercely raged his pain
That like a corpse he fell along the plain.

This is a fine painting in the style I have attempted to characterise—the imagery of the Greek mythology taking a new and natural form of fanciful romance. It is alien to anything in antique poetry or sculpture. Yet the poet's imagination had been touched to finest issues by the spirit of the Greeks before he wrote it. Incapable of transplanting the flowers of antiquity like delicate exotics into the conservatory of studied art, he acclimatised them to the air of thought and feeling in which his own romantic spirit breathed. This distinguishes him from Poliziano, whose stately poem, like the palm-house in Kew Gardens, contains specimens of all the fairest species gathered from the art of Greece and Rome. Even more exquisitely instinct with the first April freshness of Renaissance feeling is another episode, where Boiardo presents the old tale of Narcissus under a wholly new and original aspect. By what strange freak of fancy has he converted Echo into an Empress of the East and added the pathos of the fairy Silvanella, whose petulance amid her hopeless love throws magic on the well! We are far away indeed from the Pompeian frescoes here[1]:

[1] II. xvii. 49 *et seq.*

Beyond the bridge there was a little close
All round the marble of that fountain fair;
And in the midst a sepulchre arose,
Not made by mortal art, however rare:
Above in golden letters ran the glose,
Which said, 'That soul is vain beyond compare
That falls a-doting on his own sweet eyes.
Here in the tomb the boy Narcissus lies.'

Erewhile Narcissus was a damozel
So graceful, and of beauty so complete,
That no fair painted form adorable
Might with his perfect loveliness compete;
Yet not less fair than proud, as poets tell,
Seeing that arrogance and beauty meet
Most times, and thus full well with mickle woe
The laity of love is taught to know.

So that the Empress of the Orient
Doting upon Narcissus beyond measure,
And finding him on love so little bent,
So cruel and so careless of all pleasure,
Poor wretch, her dolorous days in weeping spent,
Craving from morn till eve of love the treasure,
Praying vain prayers of power from Heaven to turn
The very sun, and make him cease to burn.

Yet all these words she cast upon the wind;
For he, heart-hardened, would not hear her moan,
More than the asp, both deaf to charms and blind.
Wherefore by slow degrees more feeble grown,
Toward death she daily dwindling sank and pined;
But ere she died, to Love she cried alone,
Pouring sad sighs forth with her latest breath,
For vengeance for her undeserved death.

And this Love granted: for beside the stream
Of which I spoke, Narcissus happed to stray
While hunting, and perceived its silvery gleam;
Then having chased the deer a weary way,
He leaned to drink, and saw as though in dream,
His face, ne'er seen by him until that day;
And as he gazed, such madness round him floated,
That with fond love on his fair self he doted.

Whoever heard so strange a story told?
Justice of Love! how true, how strong it is!
Now he stands sighing by the fountain cold
For what he hath, yet never can be his!
He that was erst so hard as stone of old,
Whom ladies like a god on bended knees
Devoutly wooed, imploring him for grace,
Now dies of vain desire for his own face.

Poring upon his perfect countenance,
Which on this earth hath ne'er a paragon,
He pined in deep desire's extravagance,
Little by little, like a lily blown,
Or like a cropped rose; till, poor boy, the glance
Of his black eyes, his cheek's vermilion,
His snowy whiteness, and his gleeful mirth
Death froze who freezes all things upon earth.

Then by sad misadventure through the glade
The fairy Silvanella took her way;
And on the spot where now this tomb is made,
Mid flowers the dead youth very beauteous lay:
She, marvelling at his fair face, wept and stayed
In sore discomfiture and cold dismay;
Nor could she quit the place, but slowly came
To pine and waste for him with amorous flame.

Yea, though the boy was dead, for him she burned:
Pity and grief her gentle soul o'erspread:
Beside him on the grass she lay and mourned,
Kissing his clay-cold lips and mouth and head.
But at the last her madness she discerned,
To love a corpse wherefrom the soul had fled:
Yet knows she not, poor wretch, her doom to shun;
She fain would love not, yet she must love on.

When all the night and all the following day
Were wasted in the torrent of her woes,
A comely tomb of marble fair the Fay
Built by enchantment in the flowery close;
Nor ever from that station would she stray,
But wept and mourned; till worn by weary throes,
Beside the fount within a little space
Like snow before the sun she pined apace.

Yet for relief, or that she might not rue
Alone the luckless doom which made her die,
E'en mid the pangs of love such charms she threw
Upon the fount in her malignity,
That all who passing toward the water drew
And gazed thereon, perchance with listless eye,
Must in the depth see maiden faces fair,
Graceful and soul-enthralling mirrored there.

They in their brows have beauty so entire
That he who gazes cannot turn to fly,
But in the end must fade of mere desire,
And in that field lay himself down to die.
Now it so chanced that by misfortune dire
A king, wise, gentle, ardent, passed thereby,
Together with his true and loving dame;
Larbin and Calidora, such their name.

In these stanzas the old vain passion of Narcissus for his own beauty lives again a new life of romantic poetry. That the enchantment of the boy's fascination, prolonged through Silvanella's mourning for his death, should linger for ever after in the fount that was his tomb, is a peculiarly modern touch of mysterious fancy. This part of the romance has little in common with the classic tale of Salmacis; it is far more fragile and refined. The Greeks did not carry their human sympathy with nature, deep and loyal as indeed it was, so far into the border-land of sensual and spiritual things. Haunted hills, like the Venusberg of Tannhäuser's legend; haunted waters, like Morgana's lake in Boiardo's poem; the charmed rivers and fountains of naiads, where knights lose their memory and are enclosed in crystal prison-caves; these are essentially modern, the final flower and blossom of the medieval fancy, unfolding stores of old mythology and half-for-

gotten emblems to the light of day in art.[1] For their perfection it was needful that the gods of Hellas should have died, and that the phantoms of old-world divinities should linger in dreams and reveries about the shores of young romance.

Boiardo's treatment of magic is complementary to his use of classical mythology. He does not employ this important element of medieval art in its simplicity, but adapts it to the nature of his own imagination, adding, as it were, a new quality by the process of assimilation. Some of his machinery belongs, indeed, to the poems of his predecessors, or is framed in harmony with their spirit. The enchantment of Durlindana and Baiardo; the invulnerability of Orlando, Ferraguto, and other heroes; the wizardry of Malagise, Mambrino's helmet, Morgana's stag, the horse Rabicano, Argalia's lance, Angelica's ring, and the countless dragons and giants which Boiardo creates at pleasure, may be mentioned in this category. But it is otherwise with the gardens of Falerina and Dragontina, the sublacustrine domain of Fata Morgana, and the caverns of the Naiades. These, however much they may have once belonged to medieval tradition, have been alchemised by the imagination of the poet of the Renaissance. They are glimpses into ideal fairyland, which Ariosto and Tasso could but refine upon and vary in their famous gardens of Alcina and Armida. Boiardo's use of the old tradition of Merlin's fountain, and the other well of Cupid feigned by him beside it, might again be chosen to illustrate his free poetic treatment of magical motives. When

[1] See II. xxxi. xlv.; III. i. ii.

he trespasses on these enchanted regions, then and then only does he approach allegory. The quest of the tree guarded by Medusa in Tisbina's story; the achievement by Orlando of Morgana's garden, where Penitence and Fortune play their parts; and Rinaldo's encounter with Cupid in the forest of Ardennes, have obviously allegorical elements. Yet the hidden meaning is in each case less important than the adventure; and the same may be said about the highly tragic symbolism of the monster in the Rocca Crudele.[1] Boiardo had too vivid a sympathy with nature and humanity to appreciate the mysteries which allured the Northern poets of *Parzival*, the *Sangraal*, and the *Faery Queen*. When he lapses into allegory, it is with him a sign of weakness. Akin, perhaps, to this disregard for parable is the freedom of his spirit from all superstition. The religion of his knights is bluff, simple, and sincere, in no sense savouring of the cloister and the cowl. A high sense of truth and personal honour, indifference to life for life's sake, profound humility in danger, charity impelling men of power to succour the oppressed and feeble, are the fruits of their piety. But of penance for sins of the flesh, of ceremonial observances, of visions and fasts, of ascetic discipline and wonder-working images, of all the ecclesiastical trumpery with which the pseudo-Turpin is filled, and which contaminates even the *Mort d'Arthur* of our heroic Mallory, we read nothing.

In taking up the thread of Boiardo's narrative, Ariosto made use of all his predecessor had invented.

[1] See I. viii. 56 *et seq.* The whole tale of Grifone and Marchino in that Canto is horrible.

He adopted the machinery of the two fountains, the lance of Argalia, Angelica's ring, Rabicane, and the magic arts of Atalante. The characters of the *Innamorato* reappear with slight but subtle changes and with somewhat softened names in the *Furioso*.[1] Ariosto, again, followed Boiardo closely in his peculiar method of interweaving *novelle* with the main narrative; of suspending one story to resume another at a critical moment; of prefacing his cantos with reflections, and of concluding them with a courteous licence.[2] Lastly, Ariosto is at great pains, while connecting his poem with the *Innamorato*, to make it intelligible by giving short abstracts at intervals of the previous action. Yet throughout this long laborious work of continuation he preserves a studied silence respecting the poet to whom he owed so much. Was this due to the desire of burying Boiardo's fame beneath his own? Did he so contrive that the contemporary repute of the *Innamorato* should serve to float his *Furioso* and then be forgotten by posterity? If so, he calculated

[1] On Ariosto's treatment of Boiardo's characters there is much excellent criticism in Pio Rajna's *Le Fonti dell' Orlando Furioso* (Firenze, Sansoni, 1876), pp. 43-53.

[2] I do not mean that other poets—Pulci and Bello, for example—had not interwoven episodical *novelle*. The latter's poem of *Mambriano* owes all its interest to the episodes, and many of his introductory reflections are fair specimens of the discursive style. But the peculiarity of Boiardo, as followed by Ariosto, consisted in the art of subordinating these subsidiary motives to the main design. Neither Pulci nor Bello showed any true sense of poetical unity. It may here be parenthetically remarked that Francesco Bello, a native of Ferrara, called Il Cieco because of his blindness, recited his *Mambriano* at the Mantuan Court of the Gonzagas. It was not printed till after his death in 1509. This poem consists of a series of tales, loosely stitched together, each canto containing just enough to stimulate the attention of an idle audience. Rinaldo, Astolfo, and Mambriano, king of Bithynia, play prominent parts in the action.

wisely; for this is what almost immediately happened. Though the *Orlando Innamorato* was printed four times before 1513—once at Venice in 1486, once at Scandiano in 1495, and again at Venice in 1506, 1511, and 1513—and though it continued to be reprinted at Venice through the first half of the sixteenth century, yet the sudden silence of the press after this period shows that the *Furioso* had eclipsed Boiardo's fame. Still the integral connection between the two poems could not be overlooked; and just about the period of Ariosto's death, Francesco Berni conceived the notion of rewriting Boiardo's epic with the expressed intention of correcting its diction and rendering it more equal in style to the *Orlando Furioso*. This *rifacimento* was published in 1541, after his death. The mysterious circumstances that attended its publication, and the nature of the changes introduced by Berni into the substance of Boiardo's poem, will be touched upon when we arrive at this illustrious writer of burlesque verse. It is enough to mention here that Berni's version was printed twice between 1541 and 1545, and that then, like the original, it fell into comparative oblivion till the end of the last century. Meanwhile a second *rifacimento* by Domenichi appeared in 1545; and though this new issue was a mere piece of impudent book-making, it superseded Berni's masterpiece during the next two hundred years. The critics of the last century rediscovered Berni's *rifacimento*, and began to quote Boiardo's poem under his name, treating the real author as an ignorant and uncouth writer of a barbarous dialect. Thus one of the most original poets of the fifteenth century, to whom

Italy owes the form and substance of the *Furioso*, has been thrust aside and covered with contempt, by a curious irony of fortune, owing to the very qualities that ought to have ensured his immortality. Used by Ariosto as the ladder for ascending to Parnassus; by Berni as an exercising ground for the display of style; by Domenichi as the means of getting his name widely known, the *Orlando Innamorato* served any purposes but that of its great author's fame. Panizzi, by reprinting the original poem along with the *Orlando Furioso*, restored Boiardo at length to his right place in Italian literature. From that time forward it has been impossible to overlook his merits or to underestimate Ariosto's obligations to so gifted and original a master.

CHAPTER VIII.

ARIOSTO.

Ancestry and Birth of Ariosto—His Education—His Father's Death—Life at Reggio—Enters Ippolito d' Este's Service—Character of the Cardinal—Court Life—Composition and Publication of the *Furioso*—Quiet Life at Ferrara—Comedies—Governorship of Garfagnana—His Son Virginio—Last Eight Years—Death—Character and Habits—The Satires—Latin Elegies and Lyrics—Analysis of the Satires—Ippolito's Service—Choice of a Wife—Life at Court and Place-hunting—Miseries at Garfagnana—Virginio's Education—Autobiographical and Satirical Elements—Ariosto's Philosophy of Life—Minor Poems—Alessandra Benucci—Ovidian Elegies—Madrigals and Sonnets—Ariosto's Conception of Love.

ARIOSTO's family was ancient and of honourable station in the Duchy of Ferrara. His father, Nicolò, held offices of trust under Ercole I., and in the year 1472 was made Governor of Reggio, where he acquired property and married. His wife, Daria Maleguzzi, gave birth at Reggio in 1474 to their first-born, Lodovico, the poet. At Reggio the boy spent seven years of childhood, removing with his father in 1481 to Rovigo. His education appears to have been carried on at Ferrara, where he learned Latin but no Greek. This ignorance of Greek literature placed him, like Machiavelli, somewhat at a disadvantage among men of culture in an age that set great store upon the knowledge of both ancient languages. He was destined for a legal career; but, like Petrarch and Boccaccio, after spending some useless years in unconge-

nial studies, Ariosto prevailed upon his father to allow him to follow his strong bent for literature. In 1500 Nicolò Ariosto died, leaving a family of five sons and five daughters, with property sufficient for the honour of his house but scarcely adequate to the needs of his numerous children. Lodovico was the eldest. He therefore found himself at the age of twenty-six in the position of father to nine brothers and sisters, for whose education, start in life, and suitable settlement he was called on to arrange. The administration of his father's estate, and the cares thus early thrust upon him, made the poet an exact man of business, and brought him acquainted with real life under its most serious aspects. He discharged his duties with prudence and fidelity, managing by economy to provide portions for his sisters and honourable maintenance for his brothers out of their joint patrimony.

The first three years after his father's death were spent by Ariosto in the neighbourhood of Reggio, and to this period of his life we may perhaps refer some of the love-affairs celebrated in his Latin poems. He held the Captaincy of Canossa, a small sinecure involving no important duties, since the Castle of Canossa was even in those days a ruin. In 1503 he entered the service of Cardinal Ippolito d' Este, with whom he remained until 1517. He was placed upon the list of the Cardinal's extraordinary servants, to be employed in matters of confidence and delicacy, involving frequent journeys to all parts of Italy and ceremonial embassies. His pay seems to have been fixed at 240 *lire marchesane*, corresponding to about 1200 francs, charged upon

the Archiepiscopal Chancery of Milan.[1] This salary, had it been regularly paid, would have sufficed to maintain the poet in decent comfort; but he had considerable difficulty from time to time in realising the sums due to him. Ippolito urged him to take orders, no doubt with a view of securing better emoluments from benefices that could only be conferred upon a member of the priesthood. But Ariosto refused to enter a state of life for which he felt no vocation.[2] The Cardinal Deacon of S. Lucia in Silice was one of those secular princes of the Church, addicted to worldly pleasures, profuse in personal expenditure, with more inclination for the camp and the hunting-field than for the duties of his station, who since the days of Sixtus IV. had played a prominent part in the society of the Italian Courts. He was of distinguished beauty; and his military courage, like that of the Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici, was displayed in the Hungarian compaign against the Turks. With regard to his character and temper, it may suffice to remind the reader how, in a fit of jealous passion, he hired assassins to put out his natural brother Giulio's eyes. That Ippolito d' Este did not share the prevailing enthusiasm of his age for literary culture, seems pretty clear; and he failed to discern the unique genius of the man whom he had chosen for his confidential agent. Ariosto complains that he was turned into a common courier and forced to spend his days and nights upon the road by the master upon whom, at the expense of truth and reason,

[1] See *Satire*, i, 100-102; ii. 109-111.

[2] See *Satire*, i. 113-123, for his reasons. He seems chiefly to have dreaded the loss of personal liberty, if he took orders.

he conferred an immortality of fame in his great poem. Yet it would not be fair to echo the commonplace invectives against the Cardinal for illiberality and ingratitude. Ariosto knew the nature of his patron when he entered his service, and Ippolito did not hire a student but an active man of business for his work. It was an arrangement of convenience on both sides, to which the poet would never have stooped had his private means sufficed, or had the conditions of Italian society offered any decent career for a gentleman outside the circle of the Court. Moreover, it was not until after their final rupture, caused by Ariosto's refusal to undertake the Hungarian expedition in his master's train, that the true greatness of the author of the *Furioso* was revealed. How should a dissolute and ill-conditioned Cardinal have discerned that a dreamy poem in MS. on the madness of Orlando would live as long as the *Æneid*, or that the flattering lies invented by his courier would in after ages turn the fierce glare of criticism and celebrity upon the darkest corners of his own history? The old legend about his brutal reception of the *Orlando Furioso* has been now in part disproved.[1] We know that he defrayed the expenses of its publication, and secured the right and profits of its sale to Ariosto.[2] There is even an entry in his memoranda of expenditure proving that he bought a copy for the sum of one *lira marchesana*.[3] While deploring the waste of Ariosto's time and strength in the

[1] Ippolito is said to have asked the poet: 'Dove avete trovato, messer Lodovico, tante corbellerie?' That he did in effect say something of the kind is proved by *Satire*, ii. 94–99.

[2] Campori, *Notizie per la Vita di L. Ariosto* (Modena, Vincenzi, 1871), pp. 55–58.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 58.

uncongenial service of this patron, we must acknowledge that his choice of Ippolito was a mistake for which he alone was responsible, and that the panegyrics showered on such a man are wholly inexcusable.[1] When all the circumstances of their connection are taken into account, there is nothing but the extreme irritation caused by incompatibility of temper, and divergence of aims and interests, to condone the poet's private censure of the master whom publicly he loaded with praises.[2] The whole unhappy story illustrates the real conditions of that Court-life, so glowingly described by Castiglione, which proved the ruin of Tasso and the disgrace of Guarini. Could anything justify the brigandlike brutalities of Pietro Aretino, *il flagello de' Principi*, we might base his apology upon the dreary histories of these Italian poets, soured, impoverished, and broken because they had been forced to put their trust in princes. When there lay no choice between levying blackmail by menaces and coaxing crumbs by flatteries, it accorded better with the Italian ideal *virtù* to fatten upon the former kind of infamy than to starve upon the latter.

The *Orlando Furioso* was conceived and begun in the year 1505. It was sent to press in 1515. Giovanni Mazzocchi del Bondeno published it in April

[1] He penned the following couplet in 1503, when it is to be hoped he had yet not learned to know his master's real qualities :

Quis patre invicto gerit Hercule fortius arma,
Mystica quis casto castius Hippolyto ?

In another epigram, written on the death of the Cardinal, he pretends that Ippolito, hearing of Alfonso's illness, vowed his own life for his brother's and was accepted. See *Opere Minori*, i. 349.

[2] See *Satires* ii. vii. ; *Capitoli* i. ii.

1516. A large portion of the poet's life was subsequently spent in correcting and improving it. In 1518, having freed himself from Ippolito's bondage, Ariosto entered the service of Duke Alfonso I. He was termed *cameriere* or *famigliare*, and his stipend was fixed at eighty-four golden crowns per annum, with maintenance for three servants and two horses, paid in kind.[1] He occupied his own house in Ferrara; and the Duke, who recognised his great literary qualities and appreciated the new lustre conferred upon his family by the publication of the *Furioso*, left him in the undisturbed possession of his leisure.[2] The next four years were probably the happiest of Ariosto's life; for he had now at last secured independence and had entered upon the enjoyment of his fame. The Medici of Florence and Rome, and the ducal families of Urbino and Mantua, were pleased to number him among their intimate friends, and he received flattering acknowledgments of his poem from the most illustrious men of Italy. The few journeys he made at the request of Alfonso carried him to Florence, the head-quarters of literary and artistic activity. At home the time he spared from the revision of the *Furioso*, was partly devoted to the love-affairs he carried on with jealous secrecy, and partly to the superintendence of the ducal theatre. The criticism of Ariosto's comedies must be reserved for another chapter. It is enough to remark here that their composition amused him from his boyhood to his latest years. So early as 1493 he had accompanied Ercole I. to Pavia in order to play before Lodovico Sforza, and in the same year he witnessed

[1] Campori, *op. cit.* p. 59. [2] See *Satire* iv. 67–72.

the famous representation of the *Menæchmi* at Ferrara. Some of his earliest essays in literature were translations of Latin comedies, now unfortunately lost. They were intended for representation; and, as exercises in the playwright's art, they strongly influenced his style. His own *Cassaria* appeared for the first time at Ferrara in 1508; the *Suppositi* followed in 1509, and was reproduced at the Vatican in 1519. It took Leo's fancy so much that he besought the author for another comedy. Ariosto, in compliance with this request, completed the *Negromante*, which he had already had in hand during the previous ten years. The *Lena* was first represented at Ferrara in 1528, and the *Scolastica* was left unfinished at the poet's death. What part Ariosto took in the presentation of his comedies, is uncertain; but it is probable that he helped in their performance, besides directing the stage and reciting the prologue. He thus acquired a practical acquaintance with theatrical management, and it was by his advice, and on plans furnished by him, that Alfonso built the first permanent stage at Ferrara in 1532. On the last day of that year, not long after its erection, the theatre was burned down. These dates are important; since they prove that Ariosto's connection with the stage, as actor, playwright, and manager, was continuous throughout his lifetime.

Ariosto's peaceful occupations at Ferrara were interrupted early in 1522 by what must be reckoned the strangest episode of his career. On February 7 in that year, he was nominated Ducal Commissary for the government of Garfagnana, a wild upland district stretching under Monte Pellegrino almost across the

Apennines from the Lucchese to the Modenese frontiers. We find that the salary allowed him by Alfonso had never been very regularly paid, and that in 1521 the Duke, straitened in means by his warfare with the Papacy, was compelled to suspend it altogether.[1] At the same period the Communes forming what is known as Garfagnana (who had placed themselves beneath the Marquises of Ferrara in the first half of the fifteenth century, but had lately suffered from Florentine and Papal incursions) besought Alfonso to assert his suzerainty of their district and to take measures for securing its internal quiet. The emoluments of the Commissary amounted to about 930 *lire marchesane*, estimated at something like 2,300 francs of present value; and it was undoubtedly the pecuniary profits of the office which induced the Duke to offer it, and the poet to accept it.

We may think it strange that so acute a judge of men as Alfonso should have selected the author of the *Furioso*, a confirmed student, almost a recluse in his habits, and already broken in health, for the governorship of a district half-ruined by foreign raids and domestic feuds, which had become the haunt of brigands and the asylum of bandits from surrounding provinces. Yet we must remember that Ariosto had already given ample proof of his good sense and business-like qualities, not only in the administration of his own affairs, but in numerous embassies undertaken for the Cardinal and Duke, his masters. At that epoch of Italian history the name and fame of an illustrious writer were themselves a power in politics;

[1] See *Satire* v. 172–204.

and it is said that during Ariosto's first journey into Garfagnana, he owed his liberation from the hands of brigands to the celebrity of the *Orlando Furioso*.[1] Alfonso knew, moreover, that the poet was well qualified for negotiating with princes; and what was of grave practical importance, he stood in excellent personal relations to the Medici, from whom as the rulers of Florence the Garfagnana was menaced with invasion. These considerations are sufficient to explain Alfonso's choice. Nothing but necessity would probably have induced Ariosto to quit Ferrara for the intolerable seclusion of those barbarous mountains; where it was his duty to issue edicts against brigands, to hunt outlaws, to punish murderers and robbers, to exact fines for rape and infamous offences, to see that the hangman did his duty, and to sit in judgment daily upon suits that proved the savage immorality of the entire population. The hopelessness of the task might have been enough to break a sterner heart than Ariosto's, and his loathing of his life at Castelnovo found vent in the most powerful of his satires. He managed to endure this uncongenial existence for three years, from February 20, 1522, till June, 1525, sustaining his spirits with correspondence and composition, and varying the monotony of his life by visits to Ferrara. It was during his Garfagnana residence in all probability that he composed the *Cinque Canti*. The society of his dearly-loved son, Virginio—whose education he superintended and for

[1] This is one of the pretty stories on which some doubt has lately been cast. See Campori, pp. 105–110, for a full discussion of its probable truth.

whom he wrote the charming seventh Satire to Pietro Bembo—also served to diminish the dreariness of his exile from love, leisure, and the society of friends.

Virginio was Ariosto's natural son by a woman of Reggio. He collected the Latin poems after his father's death, and prepared the *Cinque Canti* for Manuzio's press in 1545. He also helped his uncle Gabriele to finish *La Scolastica*, and wrote a few brief recollections of his father. Ariosto had a second illegitimate son, named Giovanni Battista, who distinguished himself in a military career.

The last eight years of Ariosto's life were spent in great tranquillity at Ferrara. Soon after his return from Garfagnana he built his house in the Contrada Mirasol, and placed upon it the following characteristic inscription[1]:

Parva sed apta mihi sed nulli obnoxia sed non
Sordida parta meo sed tamen ære domus.

About this time, too, he married the lady to whom for many years he had been tenderly attached.[2] She was the Florentine Alessandra Benucci, widow of Tito Strozzi, whom he first saw at Florence in the year 1513. The marriage was kept strictly secret, probably because the poet did not choose to relinquish the income he derived from certain minor benefices. Nor did it prove fruitful of offspring, for Ariosto left no legitimate heirs. His life of tranquil study was varied

[1] 'Small, but suited to my needs, freehold, not mean, the fruit of my own earnings.' His son Virginio substituted another inscription which may still be seen upon the little house-front: *Sic domus hæc Areostea propitios habeat deos olim ut Pindarica*—'May this house of Ariosto have gods propitious as of old the house of Pindar.'

[2] The date is uncertain. It was not before 1522, perhaps even so late as 1527.

only by short journeys to Venice, Abano, and Mantua. In 1531 he was sent to negotiate certain matters for his master in the camp of the Marquis del Vasto at Correggio. On this occasion he received from Alfonso Davalos a pension of one hundred golden ducats, by a deed which sets forth in its preamble the duty of princes to recompense poets who immortalise the acts of heroes. This is the only instance of reward bestowed on Ariosto for his purely literary merits. The poet repaid his benefactor by magnificent eulogies inserted in the last edition of the *Furioso*.[1] Between the year 1525, when he left Garfagnana, and 1532, when his poem issued from the press, he devoted himself with unceasing labour to its revision and improvement. The edition of 1516 consisted of forty cantos. That of 1532 contained forty-six, and the whole text had been subjected in the interval to minute alterations.[2] Not long after the publication of the revised edition Ariosto's health gave way. His constitution had never been robust, for he suffered habitually from a catarrh of the lungs which made his old life as Ippolito d' Este's courier not only distasteful but dangerous.[3] Toward the close of 1532 this complaint took the form of a consumption, which ended his days on the sixth of June, 1533. Great pains have been bestowed by his biographers on proving that he died a good Catholic; nor is there any reason to suppose that he neglected the consolations of the Church in his last hours. He was by no means a man

[1] xv. 28; xxxiii. 24.

[2] See Panizzi, *op. cit.* vol. vi. p. cxix. for a description of these verbal changes.

[3] See especially *Satire* ii. 28–51, and *Capitolo* i.

to break abruptly with tradition or to make an indecorous display of doubts that may have haunted him. Yet the best Latin verses he ever penned were a half-humorous copy of hendecasyllables for his own epitaph, which seem to prove that he applied Montaigne's *peut-être* even to the grave.[1]

Of Ariosto's personal habits and opinions we know unfortunately but little, beyond what may be gathered from the incomparably transparent self-revelation of his satires. His son, Virginio, who might have amply satisfied our curiosity, confined himself to the fewest and briefest details in the notes transcribed and published by Barotti. Some of these, however, are so characteristic that it may not be inopportune to translate them. With regard to his method of composition, Virginio writes: 'He was never satisfied with his verses, but altered them again and again, so that he could not keep his lines in his memory, and consequently lost many of his compositions. . . . In horticulture he followed the same system as in composition, for he would not leave anything he planted for more than three months in one place; and if he sowed peaches or any kind of seed, he went so often to see if they were sprouting, that at last he broke the shoots. He had but small knowledge of herbs, and used to think that whatever grew near the things he had sown, were the plants themselves, and watched them diligently till his mistake was proved beyond all doubt. I remember once, when he had planted capers, he went every day to see them and was greatly delighted at their luxuriance. At last he discerned that they were

[1] 'Ludovici Areosti humantur ossa,' etc., *Op. Min.* i. 365.

but elders, and that the capers had not come up at all. . . . He was not much given to study, and cared to see but few books. Virgil gave him pleasure, and Tibullus for his diction; but he greatly commended Horace and Catullus, Propertius not much. . . . He ate fast and much, and made no distinction of food. So soon as he came home, if he found the bread set out, he would eat one piece walking, while the meats were being brought to table. When he saw them spread, he had water poured upon his hands and then began to eat whatever was nearest to him. . . . He was fond of turnips.'

From the bare details of Ariosto's biography it is satisfactory to turn to the living picture of the man himself revealed in his Satires. These compositions rank next to the *Orlando Furioso* in the literary canon of his works, and have the highest value for the light they cast upon his temperament and mode of feeling. Though they are commonly called Satires, they rather deserve the name of Epistles; for while a satiric element gives distinct flavour to each of the seven poems, this is subordinated to personal and familiar topics of correspondence. We learn from them what the great artist of the golden age thought and felt about the times in which he lived; what moved his indignation or aroused his sympathy; how he strove to meet the troubles of his chequered life; and where, amid the carnival of that mad century, he laid his finger upon hidden social maladies. Reading them, we come to know the man himself, and are better able to understand how, while Italy was distracted with wars and trampled on by foreign armies, he could withdraw him-

self from the tumult, and spend his years in polishing the stanzas of *Orlando*. The Satires do not reveal a hero or a sage, a poet passionate like Dante with the sense of wrong, or like Petrarch aspiring after an impossible ideal. It is rather the type of Boccaccio's character, refined and purged of sensuality, with delicate touches of irony and a more fastidious taste, that meets us in this portrait of Ariosto painted by himself. His mental vision is more lucid, his judgment more acute, his philosophy less indulgent, and his ideal of art more exacting; yet he, too, might be nicknamed *Lodovico della Tranquillità*. With his head in Philiroe's lap beside a limpid rivulet, he basks away the summer hours, and cares not whether French or German get the upper hand in Italy.[1] Does it greatly signify, he asks Ercole Strozzi in one of his Latin poems, whether we serve a French or an Italian tyrant? Servitude is the same, if the despot be a barbarian only in manners, like our princelings, or in name too, like these foreigners.[2]

Left alone to study and to polish verses, Ariosto

[1] See the *Opere Minori*, vol. i. p. 336. Also Carducci's eloquent defence of these Horatian verses in his essay, *Delle Poesie Latine di L. Ariosto* (Bologna, Zanichelli, 1876), p. 82. The latter treatise is a learned criticism of Ariosto's Latin poetry from a point of view somewhat too indulgent to Ariosto as a poet and a man. Carducci, for example, calls the four Alcaic stanzas in question 'una cosellina quasi perfetta,' though they contain three third lines like these :

> Furore militis tremendo . . . . .
> Jacentem aquæ ad murmur cadentis . . . . .
> Mecumque cespite hoc recumbens.

Ariosto was but second-rate among the Latin versifiers of his century. It must, however, be added that his Latin poems were written in early manhood and only published after his death by Giambattista Pigna, in 1553.

[2] *Op. Min.* vol. i. p. 333 :

is content. He is content to flatter and confer immortality on the master he despises. He is content to rest in one place, turning his maps over when he fain would take a journey into foreign lands. Only let him be, and give him enough to live upon, and he will trouble no man, dispute no pretender's claims, raise no inconvenient questions of right and wrong, inflame the world with no far-reaching thoughts, but gild the refined gold of his purest phrases and paint the lilies of his loveliest thoughts in placid ease. Italy has grown old, and Ariosto is the genius of a tired, world-weary, disillusioned age. What is there worth a struggle? At the same time he preserves his independence as a private gentleman. He passes free judgment upon society; and the patron he has praised officially in his epic, receives hard justice in his Satires. He is frank and honest, free from hypocrisy and guile, genial and loyal toward his friends, upright in his dealings and manly in his instincts. We respect his candour, his contempt for worldly honours, and his love of liberty. We admire his intellectual sagacity, his deep and wise philosophy of life, the knowledge of the world so easily communicated, the irony so pungent yet so free from bitterness, which gives piquancy to these familiar discourses. Still both respect and admiration are tempered with some

> Quid nostra an Gallo regi an servire Latino,
> Si sit idem hinc atque hinc non leve servitium?
> Barbaricone esse est pejus sub nomine, quam sub
> Moribus? At ducibus, Dii, date digna malis.

What Ariosto thought about the Italian despots finds full expression in the *Cinque Canti*, ii. 5, 6, where he protests that Caligula, Nero, Phalaris, Dionysius and Creon were surpassed by them in cruelty and crime.

regret that the greatest poet of the sixteenth century should have been so easy-going. Such is the Ariosto revealed to us by the Satires—not a noble or sublime being: by no means the man to save the State if safety had been possible. Throughout the tragedy of Italy's last years of freedom he moves, an essentially comic character, only redeemed by genius and by *Weltweisheit* from the ridicule attaching to a man whose aims are commonplace, and whose complaints against the world are petty. He is not servile enough to accept the humiliations of a courtier's lot without a murmur. He is not proud enough to break his chains and live in haughty isolation. Hence in these incomparable records of his private opinion, we find him at one moment painting the discomforts of his position with a *naïveté* that provokes our laughter, at another analysing the vices of society with luminous acumen, then shrugging his shoulders and summoning philosophy to his aid with a final cry of *Pazienza!*

The motive of the first Epistle is a proposed journey to Rome.[1] The second enumerates the reasons why the poet will not accompany Ippolito d' Este to Hun-

[1] I have followed the order of Lemonnier's edition, vol i. of *Opere Minori*, Florence, 1857. But the dates of composition are uncertain, and it may be doubted whether Ariosto's own autograph can be taken as the basis of a chronological arrangement. Much obscurity rests upon these poems. We do not know, for instance, whether they were sent to the friends addressed in them by name, or whether the author intended them for publication. The student may profitably consult upon these points the lithographed facsimile of the autograph, published at Bologna by Zanichelli in 1875. Meanwhile it is enough to mention that the first epistle was addressed to Messer Galasso Ariosto, the poet's brother, the second to Messer Alessandro Ariosto and Messer Lodovico da Bagno, the third and fourth to Messer Annibale Maleguccio, the fifth to Messer Sismondo Maleguccio, the sixth to Messer Buonaventura Pistofilo, and the seventh to Monsignore Pietro Bembo.

gary. The subject of the third is the choice of a wife. The fourth discusses the vanity of honours and wealth in comparison with a contented mind. The fifth describes the poet's isolation in the Garfagnana, and contains a confession of his love. In the sixth he explains why he does not wish to go to Rome and seek advancement from Clement VII. The seventh is devoted to the education of youth in the humanities, and contains a retrospect of his own early life. The satire of the first is directed against the ambition and avarice of priests, the pride of Roman prelates, and the nepotism of the Popes. The passage describing an ecclesiastic's levee is justly famous for its humour; and the diatribe on Papal vices for its force. The second shows how the dependents upon princes are forced to flatter, and how they exchange their freedom for the empty honour of sitting near great men at table. Ariosto takes occasion to describe the character of Ippolito d' Este, who cared for his hawks and hounds more than for the Muses, and who paid his body-servants better than the poet of Orlando.[1] 'I owe you nothing, Phœbus, nor you, holy college of the Muses! From you I never got enough to buy myself a cloak. "Indeed? your lord has given you . . . ." More than the price of several cloaks, I grant. But not for your sake, Muses, I am certain. He has told me, and I do not mind repeating it, that my verses are just worth the price of their waste paper. He will not give a penny for my praises, but pays me for courier's service. His followers in the

[1] The first and second *Capitoli*, upon the irksome and exhausting service of the Cardinal, as dangerous to Ariosto's health as it was irritating to his temper, should be read side by side with this Epistle.

barge or villa, his *valet-de-chambre* and butler, his lacqueys who outwatch the night, get paid. But when I set his name with honour in my verse, he tells me I have whiled my time away in ease and pleasure—I had pleased him better by attendance on his person. If you remind me that I owe to him a third of the Chancery dues at Milan, I answer that he gave me this because I ply both spur and whip, change beasts and guides, and hurry over hills and precipices, risking my life upon his business.'

The third Epistle is a masterpiece of sound counsel and ripe knowledge of the world. Better rules could not be given about the precautions to be taken in selecting a wife, the qualities a man should seek in her, and the conduct he should use toward her after marriage. The satire consists in that poor opinion of female honesty which the author of the *Furioso* had conceived, not without much experience of women, and after mature reflection upon social institutions. It is not envenomed like the invectives of the *Corbaccio*, or exaggerated like the abuse in Alberti's dialogues. Leaning back in his arm-chair with an amused and quiet smile, the indulgent satirist enunciates truths that are biting only because they condense the wisdom of an observant lifetime. He never ceases to be kindly; and we feel, while listening to him, that his epigrams are double-edged. The poet who has learned thus much of women, gives the measure of his limited capacity for noble feeling; for while he paints them as he finds them, he leaves an impression of his own emotional banality. After making due allowance for this defect in Ariosto's point of view, we may

rank the third Epistle among the ripest products of his intellect. The fourth resumes the theme of Court-life and place-hunting. 'You ask me, friend Annibale, how I fare with Duke Alfonso, and whether I find his service lighter than the Cardinal's. To tell the truth, I do not like one burden better than the other; and were I rich enough, I certainly would be no man's servant. But I was not born an only son, and Mercury was never generous to my race. So I am forced to live at a patron's charge, and it is better to owe my maintenance to the Duke than to beg bread from door to door. I know that most people think it a grand thing to be a courtier, but I count Court-life as mere slavery. A nightingale is ill at ease in a cage, and a swallow dies after a day's imprisonment. If a man wants to be decorated with the spurs or the red hat, let him serve kings or popes. For my part, I care for neither; a turnip in my own house tastes sweeter to me than a banquet in a master's.[1] I would rather stretch my lazy limbs in my armchair than be able to boast that I had travelled over half the globe. I have seen Tuscany, Lombardy, Romagna, the Apennines and Alps, the Adriatic and the Mediterranean. That is enough for me. The rest of the world I can visit at my leisure with Ptolemy for guide. The Duke's service has this advantage, that it does not interrupt my studies, or take me far from Ferrara, where my heart is always. I think I hear you laughing at this point, and saying that neither love of study nor of country, but a woman ties me to my home. Well:

[1] See above, p. 505, for Ariosto's liking for turnips. He ate them with vinegar and wine sauce.

I will confess it frankly. But suppose I had gone to Rome to fish for benefices, says some one, I should certainly have netted more than one, especially as I was Leo's friend before his merits or his luck raised him to the highest earthly station. I knew him at Urbino when he cheered his exile with Castiglione and Bembo; and afterwards when he returned to Florence, he bade me count upon him like a brother. All this is true; but listen to a fable I will tell you.[1] In time of drought, when there was no water to be had in all the country, a shepherd found a scanty spring. He drank of it first, and next his wife, and then his children, and afterwards his servants and his cattle. Last of all there came a magpie he had petted in old days; but the bird saw that she had no right to drink of the fountain, for she was neither wife nor child nor hind, nor could she bring wealth to the household.[2] It is just the same with me. Leo has all the Medici, and all his friends in exile, who risked their lives and fortunes for him, and all the priests who made him pope, to recompense. What is there left for me? It is true that he has not forgotten me. When I went to Rome and kissed his foot, he bent down from the holy seat, and took my hand and saluted me on both cheeks. Besides, he made me free of half the stamp-dues I was bound to pay; and then, breast-full of hope but soaked with rain and smirched with mud, I went and had my

[1] Compare the apologue of the gourd and the pear-tree in the sixth Satire (55–114). It is to the same effect, but even plainer.

[2] The word I have translated 'magpie' is *gaza* in the autograph. This has been interpreted as a slip of the pen for *ganza*; but it may be a Lombardism for *gazza*. In the latter case we should translate it 'magpie,' in the former 'sweetheart.' I prefer to read *gazza*, as the ironical analogy between a magpie and a poet is characteristic of Ariosto.

supper at the Ram![1] But supposing the Pope kept all his promises and put as many mitres on my head as Michelangelo's Jonah sees beneath him in the Sistine Chapel, what would this profit me? No amount of wealth can satisfy desire. Honours and riches do not bring tranquillity of mind. True honour is, to be esteemed an honest man, and to be this in good earnest; for if you are not really one, you will be detected. What is the advantage of wearing fine clothes and being bowed to in the market-place, if people point you out behind your back as thief and traitor? There are dignities which are notorious disgraces; and the richer and greater a man is who has gained his rank dishonourably, the more he calls attention to his shame.'

Quante collane, quante cappe nove
Per dignità si comprano, che sono
Pubblici vituperi in Roma e altrove!

In the sixth Epistle written in the Garfagnana, Ariosto still further develops the same theme. His friend, Pistofilo, had advised him to go to Rome and seek preferment from Clement VII. 'What would be the use?' he argues. 'I have as much of worldly honour as I care for; and if Leo did not find it in his power to help me, I cannot expect anything from the other Medici. Nay, my friend, bait your hook with more enticing dainties: remind me of Bembo, Sadoleto, Giovio, Vida, Molza, Tibaldeo; in whose

[1] The irony of this passage is justly celebrated. After all his hopes and all the pontiff's promises, the poet gets a kiss, a trifling favour, and has to trudge down from the Vatican to his inn. The *mezza bolla* is supposed to refer to the fine for entrance on the little benefice of Sant' Agata, half of which Leo remitted.

company I might wander over the seven hills: or speak to me about the libraries of Rome. Not even these allurements would move me; for if I had to live away from Ferrara, I should not be happy in the lap of Jove. Existence is only made endurable by occasional visits to the town I love; and if the Duke wishes to fulfil my desires, he must recall me to himself and make me stationary at Ferrara. Why do I cling so to that place, you ask me? I would as lief tell you as confess my worst crimes to a friar. I am forty-nine years of age, and too old to be the slave of love.' The conclusion of the sixth Epistle makes it clear that his residence at Castelnovo was irksome to the poet because it forced him to be absent from the woman he loved. But the fifth is even more explicit. 'This day completes the first year of my exile among these barbarous mountains, dead to the Muses, divided by snows, fells, forests, rivers, from the mistress of my soul![1] I am nearly fifty, and yet love rules me like a beardless boy. Well: this weakness is at least pardonable. I do not commit murder; I do not smite or stab, or vex my neighbours. I am not consumed with avarice, ambition, prodigality, or monstrous lust. But in this doleful place my heart fails me. I cannot write poetry as I used to do at Reggio when life was young. Imprisoned between the naked heights of Pania and Pellegrino's precipices, the wild steeps of these woody Apennines enclose me in a living grave. Here in the castle, or out there in the open air, my ears are deaf-

[1] The third elegy is a beautiful lamentation over his separation from his mistress. Written to ease his heart in solitude, it is more impassioned and less guarded than the epistle.

ened with continual law-suits, accusations, brawls. Theft, murder, hatred, vengeance, anger, furnish me with occupation day and night. My time is spent in threatening, punishing, persuading, or acquitting. I write despatches daily to the Duke for counsel or for aid against the bandits that encompass me. The whole province is disorganised with brigandage, and its eighty-three villages are in a state of chronic discord. Is it likely then that Phœbus, when I call him, will quit Delphi for this den? You ask me why I left my mistress and my studies for so dolorous a cave of care. I was never greedy of money, and my stipend at Ferrara satisfied me, until the war stopped it altogether, as well as my profits from the Chancery at Milan. When I asked the Duke for help, it so happened that the Garfagnana wanted a Governor, and he sent me here with more regard for my necessities than for the needs of the people under my care. I am grateful to him for his good will; but though his gift is costly, it is not to my mind. So I am like the cock who found a jewel on his dungheap, or like the Venetian who had a fine horse given him and could not ride it.'

The satirical passages in this Epistle can be separated from its autobiography, and furnish striking specimens of Ariosto's style. In order to show how ill the world judges of the faults and follies of great men, he draws a series of portraits with a few but telling touches. Though furnished with fictitious names, they suit the persons of the time to a nicety. This, for example, is Francesco Guicciardini, as Pitti represented him:

Ermilian sì del denajo ardente
Come di Alessio il Gianfa, e che lo brama
Ogn' ora, in ogni loco, da ogni gente,
Nè amico nè fratel nè sè stesso ama ;
Uomo d' industria, uomo di grande ingegno,
Di gran governo e gran valor si chiama.

And here, without doubt, is the elder Lorenzo de' Medici[1]:

Laurin sì fa della sua patria capo,
Ed in privato il pubblico converte ;
Tre ne confina, a sei ne taglia il capo ;
Comincia volpe, indi con forze aperte
Esce leon, poi c' ha 'l popol sedutto
Con licenze, con doni e con offerte.
Gl' iniqui alzando, e deprimendo in lutto
Gli buoni, acquista titolo di saggio,
Di furti, stupri e d' omicidi brutto.

Autobiography and satire are mingled in the same unequal proportions in the seventh Epistle, which is perhaps the most interesting poem of the series. 'Bembo,' so begins the letter, 'I want my son Virginio to be well taught in the arts that elevate a man. You possess them all: I therefore ask you to recommend me a good Greek tutor at Venice or Padua, in whose house the youth may live and study. The Greek must be learned, but also of sound principles, for erudition without morality is worse than worthless. Unhappily, in these days it is difficult to find a teacher of this sort. Few humanists are free from the most infamous of vices, and intellectual vanity makes most of them sceptics also. Why is it that learning and infidelity go hand in hand? Why do our scholars

[1] It may be interesting to compare this scarcely disguised satire with the official flatteries of *Canzone* ii. and *Elegies* i., xiv., where Ariosto praises the Medici, and especially Lorenzo, as the saviours of Florence, the honour of Italy.

latinise their names of baptism, changing Peter into Pierius, and John into Janus, or Jovianus? Plato was right when he expelled such poets from his State. Little have they in common with Phœbus and Amphion who taught civil life to barbarous races. For myself, it stings me to the quick when men of my own profession are proved thus vain and vicious. Find, then, an honest tutor to instruct Virginio in Greek. I have already taught him Latin; but the difficulties of my early manhood deprived me of Greek learning. My father drove me at the spear's point into legal studies. I wasted five years in that trifling, and it was not till I was twenty that I found a teacher in Gregorio da Spoleto. He began by grounding me in Latin; but before we had advanced to Greek, the good man was summoned to Milan. His pupil, Francesco Sforza, went with Il Moro, a prisoner, into France. Gregorio followed him, and died there. Then my father died and left me the charge of my younger brothers and sisters. I had to neglect study and become a strict economist. Next my dear relative Pandolfo Ariosto, the best and ablest of our house, died; and, as if these losses were not enough, I found myself beneath the yoke of Ippolito d' Este. All through the reign of Julius II. and for seven years of Leo's pontificate he kept me on the move from place to place, and made me courier instead of poet. Small chance had I of learning Greek or Hebrew on those mountain roads.'

These abstracts of Ariosto's so-called Satires will not be reckoned superfluous when we consider the clear light they cast upon his personal character and

philosophy. The note of sincerity throughout is unmistakeable. No one can read the pure and simple language of the poet without feeling that his mind was as transparent as his style, his character as ingenuous as his diction was perspicuous. When he tells us, for example, that he does not care for honours, that he prefers his study to the halls of princes, and that a turnip in his own house tastes better than the pheasants of a ducal table, we believe him. His confession of unseasonable love, and his acknowledgment that he has none of the qualities of judge or ruler, are a security for equal frankness when he professes himself free from avarice and the common vices of his age. His satire upon women, his picture of the Roman prelates, his portraits of great men, and his condemnation of the humanists are convincing by their very moderation. Like Horace, he plays about the heart instead of wielding the whip of Lucilius. This parsimony of expression adds weight to his censure, and renders these epistles more decisive than the invectives in which contemporary authors indulged. We doubt the calumnies of Poggio and Filelfo until we read the well-considered passage of the seventh Epistle, which includes them all.[1] In like manner the last lines of the fourth Epistle confirm the Diaries of Burchard and Infessura, while the first contains an epitome of all that could be said of Alexander's nepotism. These familiar poems have, therefore, a singular value for the illustration of the Italian Renaissance in general no less than for that of Ariosto's own life. Furthermore, they are unique in the annals of Italian literature.

[1] 22-69.

The *terza rima* of Dante's vision has here become a vehicle for poetry separated by the narrowest interval from prose. It no longer lends itself to parody, as in the *Beoni* of Lorenzo de' Medici. It is not contaminated by the foul frivolities of the Bernesque *Capitoli*. It takes with accuracy the impress of the writer's common thought and feeling. The metre designed to express a sublime belief, adapts itself to the discursive utterance of a man of sense and culture in a disillusioned age; and thus we might use the varying fortunes of *terza rima* to symbolise the passage from the *trecento* to the *cinque cento*, from Dante to Ariosto, from faith and inspiration to art and reflection.

Ariosto's minor poems, with but one or two exceptions, have direct reference to the circumstances of his life. They consist of Elegies, Capitoli, and an Eclogue composed in *terza rima*, with Canzoni, Sonnets, and Madrigals of the type made obligatory by Petrarch. The poet of the *Orlando* was not great in lyric verse. These lesser compositions show his mastery of simple and perspicuous style; but the specific qualities of his best work, its colour and imagery and pointed humour, are absent. The language is sometimes pedestrian in directness, sometimes encumbered with conceits that anticipate the taste of the seventeenth century.[1] Where it is plainest, we lack the seasoning of epigram and illustration which enlivens the Satires; and though the sincere feeling and Ovidian fluency of the more ambitious lyrics render them delightful reading,

[1] As when, for instance, he calls the sun in the first *Canzone*, 'l' omicida lucido d' Achille.' Several of the sonnets are artificial in their tropes.

we acknowledge that a wider channel of description or narrative or reflection was needed for the full tide of the poet's eloquence. The purely subjective style was hardly suited to his genius.

Only three *Canzoni* are admitted into the canon of Ariosto's works. The first relates the origin of his love for Alessandra Benucci, wife of Tito Strozzi, whom he admired as wife and married as widow. It was on S. John's Day in the year 1513 that he saw her at Florence among the gay crowd of the mid-summer festival. She was dressed in black silk embroidered with two vines, her golden hair twisted into heavy braids, and her forehead overshadowed with a jewelled laurel-wreath. The brightness of the scene was blotted out for the poet, and swallowed in the intense lustre of her beauty :

D' altro ch' io vidi, tenni
Poco ricordo, e poco me ne cale :
Sol mi restò immortale
Memoria, ch' io non vidi in tutta quella
Bella città, di voi cosa più bella.

How much he admired Florence, he tells us in the fourteenth elegy, where this famous compliment occurs :

Se dentro un mur, sotto un medesmo nome
Fosser raccolti i tuoi palazzi sparsi,
Non ti sarian da pareggiar due Rome.

The second *Canzone* is supposed to be spoken by the soul of Giuliano de' Medici, Duke of Nemours, to his widow, Filiberta of Savoy. Elevation of conception raises the language of this poem to occasional sublimity, as in the passage where he speaks of immortality :

Di me t' incresca, ma non altrimente
Che, s' io vivessi ancor, t' incresceria
D' una partita mia
Che tu avessi a seguir fra pochi giorni :
E se qualche e qualch' anno anco soggiorni
Col tuo mortale a patir caldo e verno,
Lo dêi stimar per un momento breve,
Verso quel altro, che mai non riceve
Nè termine nè fin, viver eterno.

The undulation of rhythm obeying the thought renders these lines in a high sense musical.

Some of the Elegies have been already used in illustration of other poems. There remain a group apart, which seem to have been directly modelled upon Ovid. Of these the sixth, describing a night of love, and the seventh, when the lover dares not enter his lady's door in moonlight lest he should be seen, are among the finest. The ninth, upon fidelity in love, contains these noble lines :

La fede mai non debbe esser corrotta,
O data a un sol o data ancor a cento,
Data in palese o data in una grotta.
Per la vil plebe è fatto il giuramento ;
Ma tra gli spirti più elevati sono
Le semplici promesse un sagramento.

The second is written on the famous black pen fringed with gold, which Ariosto adopted for his device and wore embroidered on his clothes. He declines to explain the meaning of this bearing ; but it is commonly believed to have referred in some way to his love for Alessandra Strozzi. Baruffaldi conjectures that her black dress and golden hair suggested the two colours. But since this elegy threatens curious enquirers with Actæon's fate, we may leave his device to the obscurity

he sought. Secresy in respect to the great passion of his life was jealously maintained by Ariosto. His inkstand at Ferrara still bears a Cupid with one finger on his lip, as though to bid posterity observe the reticence adopted by the poet in his lifetime.

The Madrigals and Sonnets do not add much to our conception of Ariosto's genius. It has been well remarked that while his Latin love-poems echo the style of Horace, these are imitations of Petrarch's manner.[1] In the former he celebrates the facile attractions of Lydia and Megilla, or confesses that he is inconstant in everything except in always varying his loves.[2] In the latter he professes to admire a beautiful soul and eloquent lips more than physical charms, praises the spiritual excellences of his mistress, and writes complimentary sonnets on her golden hair.[3] In neither case is there any insincerity. Ariosto never pretended to be a platonic lover, nor did he credit women with great nobility of nature. Yet on the other hand it is certain that he was no less tenderly than passionately attached to Alessandra; and this serious love, of which the Sonnets are perhaps the record, triumphed over the volatility of his earlier affections.

It is enough in this chapter to have dealt with Ariosto's life and minor writings. The *Orlando Furioso*, considered both as the masterpiece of his genius and also as the representative poem of the Italian Renaissance, must form the subject of a separate study.

[1] De Sanctis, ii.

[2] See especially the lines entitled *De suâ ipsius mobilitate.*

[3] See Sonnets xii. xi. xxvi. xxiii.

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.

Note on Italian Heroic Verse.

(See above, p. 24.)

THE Italian hendecasyllable is an accentual iambic line of five feet with one unaccented syllable over and included in the rhyme. Thus the first line of the *Inferno* may be divided:—

Nel mez|zo del | cammin | di nos|tra vita.

When the verse is so constructed, it is said to be *piano*, the rhyme being what in English we call double. When the rhyme is single, the verse is *tronco*, and the rhythm corresponds to that of our heroic, as in the following instance (*Par.* xxv. 102):

Il ver|no avreb|be un me|se d' un | sol dì.

When the rhyme is treble, the verse is *sdrucciolo*, of which form this is a specimen (*Par.* xxvi. 78):

Che ri|fulge|va più | di mil|le milia.

It is clear that the quality of the verse is not affected by the number of syllables in the rhyme; and the line is called hendecasyllabic because *versi piani* are immeasurably more frequent and more agreeable to the ear than either *versi tronchi* or *sdruccioli*.

If we enquire into the origin of the metre, the first remark we have to make is that lines of similar construction were used by poets of Provence. Dante, for example, quotes (*De Vulg. Eloq.* ii. 2.) from Bertram:

Non puesc mudar q' un chantar non esparja.

This fact will seem to many minds conclusive on the point in question. But, following the investigations of recent scholars, we find this form of verse pretty generally referred to the watch-song of the Modenese soldiers. Thus Professor Adolfo Bartoli, after quoting two lines of that song,

O tu qui servas armis ista moenia,
Noli dormire, moneo, sed vigila,

adds: 'qui apparisce per la prima volta il nostro verso endecasillabo, regolarmente accentato.' If this, which is the view accepted by Italian critics, be right, he ought to have added that each line of the Modenese watch-song is a *sdrucciolo* verse. Otherwise, the rhythm bears the appearance of a six foot accentual iambic, an appearance which is confirmed by the recurrence of a single rhyme or assonance in *a* throughout the poem. Still the strong accent on the antepenultimate syllable of every verse is sufficient to justify us in regarding the metre as *endecasillabo sdrucciolo.*

Going further back than the Modenese watch-song (date about 924), the next question is whether any of the classic metres supplied its precedent. By reading either Horatian Sapphics or Catullian hendecasyllables without attention to quantity, we may succeed in marking the beat of the *endecasillabo piano.*[1] Thus:

Cui do|no lep|idum | novum | libellum?

and:

Serus | in cœ|lum red|eas, | diuque
Lætus | inter|sis po|pulo | Quirini.

When these lines are translated into literal Italian, the metamorphosis is complete. Thus:

Cui don|o il lep|ido | nuovo | libretto?

and:

Tardo in | ciel ried|i e di|utur|no serba
Fausto il | tuo aspet|to al pop|ol di | Quirino.

**

Even Alcaics, unceremoniously handled by a shifting of the accent, which is violent disregard of quantity, yield like results. Thus:

Atqui | scie | bat quæ sibi | barbarus.

[1] See Ermolao Rubieri, *Storia della Poesia Popolare Italiana*, p. 45.

Or in Italian :

Eppur | conob|be ciò | ch' il man|igoldo.

The accentual Sapphics of the middle ages throw some curious light upon these transmutations of metre. In a lament for Aquileia (tenth century) we find these lines :

Bella sublimis inclyta divitiis,
Olim fuisti celsa ædificiis.

Here, instead of the Latin Sapphic, we get a loose *sdrucciolo* rhythm. The metre of the Serventese seems built upon this medieval Sapphic model. Here is an example[1] :

O Jeso Cristo, padre onipotente,
Aprestame lo core con la mente
Che rasonare possa certamente
Un servientese.

When the humanistic Italians tried to write Italian Sapphics, they produced a metre not very dissimilar. Thus in the *Certamen Coronarium*[2] :

Eccomi, i' son qui Dea degli amici,
Quella qual tutti li omini solete
Mordere, e falso fuggitiva dirli
Or la volete.

What seems tolerably certain is that the modern Italian hendecasyllable was suggested by one of the Latin eleven-syllabled metres, but that, in the decay of quantitative prosody, an iambic rhythm asserted itself. It has no exact correspondence in any classic metre ; but it was early developed out of the accentual Latin measures which replaced quantitative metre in the middle ages. Signor Rubieri points out that there may be traces of it in the verses of Etruscan inscriptions.[3] Nor is it impossible that the rhythm was indigenous, persisting through a long period of Græco-Roman culture, to reappear when the rustic language threw out a modern idiom

[1] Carducci, *Intorno ad Alcune Rime*, p. 107.
[2] *Opere Volgari di L. B. Alberti*, vol. i. p. ccxxv.
[3] See passage referred to above, p. 524, note.

APPENDIX II.

Ten Sonnets translated from Folgore da San Gemignano.

(See Chapter I. p. 55.)

ON THE ARMING OF A KNIGHT.

I.

This morn a young squire shall be made a knight;
Whereof he fain would be right worthy found,
And therefore pledgeth lands and castles round
To furnish all that fits a man of might.
Meat, bread and wine he gives to many a wight;
Capons and pheasants on his board abound,
Where serving men and pages march around;
Choice chambers, torches, and wax-candle light.
Barbed steeds, a multitude, are in his thought,
Mailed men at arms and noble company,
Spears, pennants, housing-cloths, bells richly wrought.
Musicians following with great barony
And jesters through the land his state have brought,
With dames and damsels whereso rideth he.

II.

Lo Prowess, who despoileth him straightway,
And saith: 'Friend, now beseems it thee to strip;
For I will see men naked, thigh and hip,
And thou my will must know and eke obey;
And leave what was thy wont until this day,
And for new toil, new sweat, thy strength equip;
This do, and thou shalt join my fellowship,
If of fair deeds thou tire not nor cry nay.'

And when she sees his comely body bare,
Forthwith within her arms she him doth take,
And saith: 'These limbs thou yieldest to my prayer;
I do accept thee, and this gift thee make,
So that thy deeds may shine for ever fair,
My lips shall never more thy praise forsake.'

III.

Humility to him doth gently go,
And saith: 'I would in no wise weary thee;
Yet must I cleanse and wash thee thoroughly,
And I will make thee whiter than the snow.
Hear what I tell thee in few words, for so
Fain am I of thy heart to hold the key;
Now must thou sail henceforward after me;
And I will guide thee as myself do go.
But one thing would I have thee straightway leave:
Well knowest thou mine enemy is pride;
Let her no more unto thy spirit cleave:
So leal a friend with thee will I abide
That favour from all folk thou shalt receive;
This grace hath he who keepeth on my side.'

IV.

Then did Discretion to the squire draw near,
And drieth him with a fair cloth and clean,
And straightway putteth him the sheets between,
Silk, linen, counterpane, and minevere.
Think now of this! Until the day was clear,
With songs and music and delight the queen,
And with new knights, fair fellows well-beseen,
To make him perfect, gave him goodly cheer.
Then saith she: 'Rise forthwith, for now 'tis due,
Thou shouldst be born into the world again;
Keep well the order thou dost take in view.'
Unfathomable thoughts with him remain
Of that great bond he may no more eschew;
Nor can he say, 'I'll hide me from this chain.'

V.

Comes Blithesomeness with mirth and merriment,
All decked in flowers she seemeth a rose-tree;
Of linen, silk, cloth, fur, now beareth she
To the new knight a rich habiliment;
Head-gear and cap and garland flower-besprent,
So brave they were, Maybloom he seemed to be;
With such a rout, so many and such glee,
That the floor shook. Then to her work she went;
And stood him on his feet in hose and shoon;
And purse and gilded girdle neath the fur
That drapes his goodly limbs, she buckles on;
Then bids the singers and sweet music stir,
And showeth him to ladies for a boon
And all who in that following went with her.

THE CRY FOR COURTESY.

Courtesy! Courtesy! Courtesy! I call:
But from no quarter comes there a reply.
They who should show her, hide her; wherefore I
And whoso needs her, ill must us befall.
Greed with his hook hath ta'en men one and all,
And murdered every grace that dumb doth lie:
Whence, if I grieve, I know the reason why;
From you, great men, to God I make my call:
For you my mother Courtesy have cast
So low beneath your feet she there must bleed;
Your gold remains, but you're not made to last:
Of Eve and Adam we are all the seed:
Able to give and spend, you hold wealth fast:
Ill is the nature that rears such a breed!

ON THE GHIBELLINE VICTORIES.

I praise thee not, O God, nor give thee glory,
Nor yield thee any thanks, nor bow the knee,
Nor pay thee service; for this irketh me
More than the souls to stand in purgatory;
Since thou hast made us Guelphs a jest and story
Unto the Ghibellines for all to see:
And if Uguccion claimed tax of thee,
Thou'dst pay it without interrogatory.
Ah, well I wot they know thee! and have stolen
St. Martin from thee, Altopascio,
St. Michael, and the treasure thou hast lost;
And thou that rotten rabble so hast swollen
That pride now counts for tribute; even so
Thou'st made their heart stone-hard to thine own cost.

TO THE PISANS.

Ye are more silky-sleek than ermines are,
Ye Pisan counts, knights, damozels, and squires,
Who think by combing out your hair like wires
To drive the men of Florence from their car.
Ye make the Ghibellines free near and far,
Here, there, in cities, castles, buts, and byres,
Seeing how gallant in your brave attires,
How bold you look, true paladins of war.
Stout-hearted are ye as a hare in chase,
To meet the sails of Genoa on the sea;
And men of Lucca never saw your face.
Dogs with a bone for courtesy are ye:
Could Folgore but gain a special grace,
He'd have you banded 'gainst all men that be.

ON DISCRETION.

Dear friend, not every herb puts forth a flower;
Nor every flower that blossoms, fruit doth bear;
Nor hath each spoken word a virtue rare;
Nor every stone in earth its healing power:
This thing is good when mellow, that when sour;
One seems to grieve, within doth rest from care;
Not every torch is brave that flaunts in air;
There is what dead doth seem, yet flame doth shower.
Wherefore it ill behoveth a wise man
His truss of every grass that grows to bind,
Or pile his back with every stone he can,
Or counsel from each word to seek to find,
Or take his walks abroad with Dick and Dan:
Not without cause I'm moved to speak my mind.

ON DISORDERED WILL.

What time desire hath o'er the soul such sway
That reason finds nor place nor puissance here,
Men oft do laugh at what should claim a tear,
And over grievous dole are seeming gay.
He sure would travel far from sense astray
Who should take frigid ice for fire; and near
Unto this plight are those who make glad cheer
For what should rather cause their soul dismay.
But more at heart might he feel heavy pain
Who made his reason subject to mere will,
And followed wandering impulse without rein;
Seeing no lordship is so rich as still
One's upright self unswerving to sustain,
To follow worth, to flee things vain and ill.

APPENDIX III.

Translations from Alesso Donati.

(See Chapter III. p. 157.)

THE NUN.

The knotted cord, dark veil and tunic grey,
I'll fling aside, and eke this scapulary,
Which keeps me here a nun immured alway:
And then with thee, dressed like a gallant gay,
With girded loins and limber gait and free,
I'll roam the world, where chance us twain may carry.
I am content slave, scullion-wench to be;
That will not irk me as this irketh me!

THE LOVERS.

Nay, get thee gone now, but so quietly,
By God, so gently go, my love,
That yon damned villain may hear nought thereof!
He's quick of hearing: if he hears but me
Turn myself round in bed,
He clasps me tight for fear I may be sped.
God curse whoever joined me to this hind,
Or hopes in churls good merchandise to find!

THE GIRL.

In dole I dree the days all lonely here,
A young girl by her mother shut from life,
Who guardeth me with jealousy and strife:
But by the cross of God I swear to her,
If still she keeps me pent up thus to pine,
I'll say: 'Aroint thee, thou fell hag malign!'
And fling yon wheel and distaff to the wall,
And fly to thee, my love, who art mine all!

APPENDIX IV.

Jacopone's Presepio, Corrotto, and Cantico dell' Amore Superardente, Translated into English Verse.

(See Chapter V. pp. 291 *et seq.*)

THREE POEMS ATTRIBUTED TO JACOPONE DA TODI.

THOUGH judging it impossible to preserve the least part of Jacopone's charm in a translation, I have made versions of the Christmas Carol, the Passion Poem, and the Hymn of Divine Love, alluded to in chapter v., pp. 291–298. The metrical structure of the first is confused in the original; but I have adopted a stanza which follows the scheme pretty closely, and reproduces the exact number of the lines. In the second I have forced myself to repeat the same rhyme at the close of each of the thirty-four strophes, which in the Italian has a very fine effect—the sound being *ato*. No English equivalent can do it justice. The third poem I admit to be really untranslatable. The recurrences of strong vowelled endings in *ore, are, ezza, ate* cannot be imitated.

THE PRESEPIO.

By thy great and glorious merit,
Mary, Mother, Maid!
In thy firstling, new-born child
All our life is laid.

That sweet smiling infant child,
Born for us, I wis;
That majestic baby mild,
Yield him to our kiss!

Clasping and embracing him,
We shall drink of bliss.
Who could crave a deeper joy?—
Purer none was made.

For thy beauteous baby boy
We a-hungered burn;
Yea, with heart and soul of grace
Long for him and yearn.
Grant us then this prayer; his face
Toward our bosom turn:
Let him keep us in his care,
On his bosom stayed!

Mary, in the manger where
Thou hast strewn his nest,
With thy darling baby we
Fain would dwell at rest.
Those who cannot take him, see,
Place him on their breast!
Who shall be so rude and wild
As to spurn thee, Maid?

Come and look upon her child
Nestling in the hay!
See his fair arms opened wide,
On her lap to play!
And she tucks him by her side,
Cloaks him as she may;
Gives her paps unto his mouth,
Where his lips are laid.

For the little babe had drouth,
Sucked the breast she gave;
All he sought was that sweet breast,
Broth he did not crave;
With his tiny mouth he pressed,
Tiny mouth that clave:
Ah, the tiny baby thing,
Mouth to bosom laid!

She with left hand cradling
Rocked and hushed her boy,
And with holy lullabies
Quieted her toy.
Who so churlish but would rise
To behold heaven's joy
Sleeping?—In what darkness drowned,
Dead and renegade?—

Little angels all around
Danced, and carols flung;
Making verselets sweet and true,
Still of love they sung;
Calling saints and sinners too
With love's tender tongue;
Now that heaven's high glory is
On this earth displayed.

Choose we gentle courtesies,
Churlish ways forswear;
Let us one and all behold
Jesus sleeping there.
Earth, air, heaven he will unfold,
Flowering, laughing fair;
Such a sweetness, such a grace
From his eyes hath rayed.

O poor humble human race,
How uplift art thou!
With the divine dignity
Re-united now!
Even the Virgin Mary, she
All amazed doth bow;
And to us who sin inherit,
Seems as though she prayed

By thy great and glorious merit,
Mary, Mother, Maid!
In thy firstling, new-born child
All our life is laid.

THE CORROTTO.

Messenger. Lady of Paradise, woe's me,
Thy son is taken, even he,
Christ Jesus, that saint blessed!
Run, Lady, look amain
How the folk him constrain:
Methinks they him have slain,
Sore scourged, with rods opprest.

Mary. Nay, how could this thing be?
To folly ne'er turned he,
Jesus, the hope of me:
How did they him arrest?

Messenger. Lady, he was betrayed;
Judas sold him, and bade
Those thirty crowns be paid—
Poor gain, where bad is best.

Mary. Ho, succour! Magdalen!
The storm is on me: men
My own son, Christ, have ta'en!
This news hath pierced my breast.

Messenger. Aid, Lady! Up and run!
They spit upon thy son,
And hale him through the town;
To Pilate they him wrest.

Mary. O Pilate, do not let
My son to pain be set!
That he is guiltless, yet
With proofs I can protest.

The Jews. Crucify! Crucify!
Who would be King, must die.
He spurns the Senate by
Our laws, as these attest.
We'll see if, stanch of state,
He can abide this fate;
Die shall he at the gate,
And Barab be redressed.

Mary. I pray thee, hear my prayer!
Think on my pain and care!
Perchance thou then wilt bear
New thoughts and change thy quest.

The Jews. Bring forth the thieves, for they
Shall walk with him this day:
Crown him with thorns, and say
He was made king in jest.

Mary. O Son, Son, Son, dear Son!
O Son, my lovely Son!
Son, who shall shed upon
My anguished bosom rest?
O jocund eyes, sweet Son!
Why art Thou silent? Son!
Son, wherefore dost Thou shun
This thy own mother's breast?

Messenger. Lady, behold the tree!
The people bring it, see,
Where the true Light must be
Lift up at man's behest!

Mary. O cross, what wilt thou do?
Wilt thou my Son undo?
Him will they fix on you,
Him who hath ne'er transgressed?

Messenger. Up, full of grief and bale!
They strip thy son, and rail;
The folk are fain to nail
Him on yon cross they've dressed.

Mary. If ye his raiment strip,
I'll see him, breast and hip!
Lo, how the cruel whip
Hath bloodied back and chest!

Messenger. Lady, his hand outspread
Unto the cross is laid:
'Tis pierced; the huge nail's head
Down to the wood they've pressed.
They seize his other hand,
And on the tree expand:
His pangs are doubled and
Too keen to be expressed!

Lady, his feet they take,
And pin them to the stake,
Rack every joint, and make
Each sinew manifest!

Mary. I now the dirge commence.
Son, my life's sole defence!
Son, who hath torn thee hence?
Sweet Son, my Son caressed!
Far better done had they
My heart to pluck away,
Than by thy cross to lay
Of thee thus dispossessed!

Christ. Mother, why weep'st thou so?
Thou dealest me death's blow.
To watch thy tears, thy woe
Unstinted, tears my breast.

Mary. Son, who hath twinned us two?
Son, father, husband true!
Son, who thy body slew?
Son, who hath thee suppressed?

Christ. Mother, why wail and chide?
I will thou shouldst abide,
And serve those comrades tried
I saved amid the rest.

Mary. Son, say not this to me!
Fain would I hang with thee
Pierced on the cross, and be
By thy side dying blessed!
One grave should hold us twain,
Son of thy mother's pain!
Mother and Son remain
By one same doom oppressed!

Christ. Mother, heart-full of woe,
I bid thee rise and go
To John, my chosen!—so
Is he thy son confessed.
John, this my mother see:
Take her in charity:
Cherish her piteously:
The sword hath pierced her breast.

Mary. Son! Ah, thy soul hath flown!
Son of the woman lone!
Son of the overthrown!
Son, poisoned by sin's pest!
Son of white ruddy cheer!
Son without mate or peer!
Son, who shall help me here,
Son, left by thee, distressed!
Son, white and fair of face!
Son of pure jocund grace!
Son, why did this wild place,
This world, Son, thee detest?
Son, sweet and pleasant Son!
Son of the sorrowing one!
Son, why hath thee undone
To death this folk unblessed?
John, my new son, behold
Thy brother he is cold!
I feel the sword foretold,
Which prophecies attest.
Lo, Son and mother slain!
Dour death hath seized the twain:
Mother and Son, they strain
Upon one cross embraced.

Here the miserable translation ends. But I would that I could summon from the deeps of memory some echo of the voice I heard at Perugia, one dark Good Friday evening, singing Penitential Psalms. This made me feel of what sort was the *Corrotto*, chaunted by the confraternities of Umbria. The psalms were sung on that occasion to a monotonous rhythm of melodiously simple outline by three solo voices in turn—soprano, tenor, and bass. At the ending of each psalm a candle before the high-altar was extinguished, until all light and hope and spiritual life went out for the damned soul. The soprano, who sustained the part of pathos, had the fulness of a powerful man's chest and larynx, with the pitch of a woman's and the timbre of a boy's voice. He seemed able to do what he chose in prolonging and sustaining notes, with wonderful effects of *crescendo* and *diminuendo*,

passing from the wildest and most piercing *forte* to the tenderest *pianissimo*. He was hidden in the organ-loft; and as he sang, the organist sustained his cry with long-drawn shuddering chords and deep groans of the diapason. The whole church throbbed with the vibrations of the rising, falling melody; and the emotional thrill was as though Christ's or Mary's soul were speaking through the darkness to our hearts. I never elsewhere heard a soprano of this sort sing in tune so perfect or with so pure an intonation. The dramatic effect produced by the contrast between this soprano and the bass and tenor was simple but exceedingly striking. Englishmen, familiar with cathedral music, may have derived a somewhat similar impression from the more complex Motett of Mendelssohn upon Psalm xxii. I think that when the Umbrian Laud began to be dramatic, the parts in such a hymn as Jacopone's *Corrotto* must have been distributed after the manner of these Perugian Good Friday services. Mary's was undoubtedly given to the soprano; that of the Jews, possibly, to the bass; Christ's, and perhaps the messenger's also, to the tenor. And it is possible that the rhythm was almost identical with what I heard; for that had every mark of venerable antiquity and popular sincerity.

I now pass to the Hymn of Divine Love, which Tresatti entitles *Cantico dell' Amore Superardente* (Book vi. 16). It consists of three hundred and seventy lines, all of which I have translated, though I content myself here with some extracts:

O Love of Charity!
Why didst thou so wound me?
Why breaks my heart through thee,
My heart which burns with Love?

It burns and glows and finds no place to stay;
It cannot fly, for it is bound so tight;
It melts like wax before the flame away;
Living, it dies; swoons, faints, dissolves outright;
Prays for the force to fly some little way;
Finds itself in the furnace fiery-white;
Ah me, in this sore plight,

Who, what consumes my breath ?
Ah, thus to live is death !
So swell the flames of Love.

Or ere I tasted Jesus, I besought
To love him, dreaming pure delights to prove,
And dwell at peace mid sweet things honey-fraught,
Far from all pain on those pure heights above :
Now find I torment other than I sought ;
I knew not that my heart would break for love !
There is no image of
The semblance of my plight !
I die, drowned in delight,
And live heart-lost in Love !

Lost is my heart and all my reason gone,
My will, my liking, and all sentiment ;
Beauty is mere vile mud for eyes to shun ;
Soft cheer and wealth are nought but detriment ;
One tree of love, laden with fruit, but one,
Fixed in my heart, supplies me nourishment :
Hourly therefrom are sent,
With force that never tires
But varies still, desires,
Strength, sense, the gifts of Love.

. . . . .

Let none rebuke me then, none reprehend,
If love so great to madness driveth me !
What heart from love her fortress shall defend ?
So thralled, what heart from love shall hope to flee ?
Think, how could any heart not break and rend,
Or bear this furnace-flame's intensity ?—
Could I but only be
Blest with some soul that knows,
Pities and feels the woes
Which whelm my heart with Love !

Lo, heaven, lo, earth cries out, cries out for aye,
And all things cry that I must love even thus !
Each calls :—With all thy heart to that Love fly,
Loving, who strove to clasp thee, amorous ;

That Love who for thy love did seek and sigh,
To draw thee up to him, He fashioned us!—
Such beauty luminous,
Such goodness, such delight,
Flows from that holy light,
Beams on my soul from Love!

. . . . .

For thee, O Love, I waste, swooning away!
I wander calling loud with thee to be!
When thou departest, I die day by day;
I groan and weep to have thee close to me:
When thou returnest, my heart swells; I pray
To be transmuted utterly in thee!
Delay not then!—Ah me!
Love deigns to bring me grace!
Binds me in his embrace,
Consumes my heart with Love!

. . . . .

Love, Love, thou hast me smitten, wounded sore!
No speech but Love, Love, Love! can I deliver!
Love, I am one with thee, to part no more!
Love, Love, thee only shall I clasp for ever!
Love, Love, strong Love, thou forcest me to soar
Heavenward! my heart expands; with love I quiver;
For thee I swoon and shiver,
Love, pant with thee to dwell!
Love, if thou lovest me well,
Oh, make me die of Love!

Love, Love, Love, Jesus, I have scaped the seas!
Love, Love, Love, Jesus, thou hast guided me!
Love, Love, Love, Jesus, give me rest and peace!
Love, Love, Love, Jesus, I'm inflamed by thee!
Love, Love, Love, Jesus! From wild waves release!
Make me, Love, dwell for ever clasped with thee!
And be transformed in thee,
In truest charity,
In highest verity,
Of pure transmuted Love!

Love, Love, Love, Love, the worlds exclaim and cry !
Love, Love, Love, Love, each thing this cry returns !
Love, Love, Love, Love, thou art so deep, so high ;
Whoso clasps thee, for thee more madly yearns !
Love, Love, thou art a circle like the sky ;
Who enters, with thy love for ever burns !
Web, woof, art thou ;. he learns,
Who clothes himself with thee,
Such sweetness, suavity,
That still he shouts, Love, Love !

Love, Love, Love, Love, thou giv'st me such strong pain !
Love, Love, Love, Love, how shall I bear this ache ?
Love, Love, Love, Love, thou fill'st my heart amain !
Love, Love, Love, Love, I feel my heart must break !
Love, Love, Love, Love, thou dost me so constrain !
Love, Love, Love, Love, absorb me for Love's sake !
Love-languor, sweet to take !
Love, my Love amorous !
Love, my delicious !
Swallow my soul in Love !

Love, Love, Love, Love, my heart it is so riven !
Love, Love, Love, Love, what wounds I feel, what bliss !
Love, Love, Love, Love, I'm drawn and rapt to heaven !
Love, Love, I'm ravished by thy beauteousness !
Love, Love, life's nought, for less than nothing given !
Love, Love, the other life is one with this !
Thy love the soul's life is !
To leave thee were death's anguish !
Thou mak'st her swoon and languish,
Clasped, overwhelmed in Love !

Love, Love, Love, Love, O Jesus amorous !
Love, Love, fain would I die embracing Thee !
Love, Love, Love, Love, O Jesus my soul's Spouse !
Love, Love, Love, Love, death I demand of thee !
Love, Love, Love, Love, Jesus, my lover, thus
Resume me, let me be transformed in thee !
Where am I ? Love ! Ah me !
Jesus, my hope ! in thee
Engulf me, whelm in Love !

APPENDIX V.

Passages translated from the Morgante Maggiore of Pulci.

(See Chapter VII. pp. 444 *et seq.*) Morgante xviii. 115.

Answered Margutte: 'Friend, I never boasted:
I don't believe in black more than in blue,
But in fat capons, boiled, or may be roasted;
And I believe sometimes in butter too,
In beer and must, where bobs a pippin toasted;
Sharp liquor more than sweet I reckon true;
But mostly to old wine my faith I pin,
And hold him saved who firmly trusts therein.

'I believe in the tartlet and the tart;
One is the mother, t'other is her son:
The perfect paternoster is a part
Of liver, fried in slips, three, two, or one;
Which also from the primal liver start:
And since I'm dry, and fain would swill a tun,
If Mahomet forbids the juice of grape,
I reckon him a nightmare, phantom, ape.

'Apollo's nought but a delirious vision,
And Trivigant perchance a midnight spectre:
Faith, like the itch, is catching; what revision
This sentence needs, you'll make, nor ask the rector:
To waste no words, you may without misprision
Dub me as rank a heretic as Hector:
I don't disgrace my lineage, nor indeed
Am I the cabbage-ground for any creed.

'Faith's as man gets it, this, that, or another!
See then what sort of creed I'm bound to follow:
For you must know a Greek nun was my mother,
My sire at Brusa, mid the Turks, a mollah;

I played the rebeck first, and made a pother
About the Trojan war, flattered Apollo,
Praised up Achilles, Hector, Helen fair,
Not once, but twenty thousand times, I swear.

'Next, growing weary of my light guitar,
I donned a military bow and quiver;
One day within the mosque I went to war,
And shot my grave old daddy through the liver:
Then to my loins I girt this scimitar,
And journeyed forth o'er sea, land, town, and river,
Taking for comrades in each holy work
The congregated sins of Greek and Turk.

'That's much the same as all the sins of hell!
I've seventy-seven at least about me, mortal;
Summer and winter in my breast they swell:
Guess now how many venial crowd the portal!
'Twere quite impossible, I know full well,
If the world never ended, to report all
The crimes I've done in this one life alone;
Each item too is catalogued and known.

'I pray you listen for one little minute;
The skein shall be unravelled in a trice:—
When I've got cash, I'm gay as any linnet,
Cast with who calls, cut cards, and fling the dice;
All times, all places, or the devil's in it,
Serve me for play; I've spent on this one vice
Fame, fortune—staked my coat, my shirt, my breeches;
I hope this specimen will meet your wishes.

'Don't ask what juggler's tricks I teach the boxes!
Or whether sizes serve me when I call,
Or jumps an ace up!—Foxes pair with foxes;
The same pitch tars our fingers, one and all!—
Perhaps I don't know how to fleece the doxies?
Perhaps I can't cheat, cozen, swindle, bawl?
Perhaps I never learned to patter slang?—
I know each trick, each turn, and lead the gang.

'Gluttony after gambling 's my prime pleasure.
Here it behoves one to be learned and wise,
To gauge the merits and the virtues measure
Of pheasant, partridge, fowl; with practised eyes
Noting each part of every dish at leisure,
Seeking where tender slice or morsel lies;
And since I've touched upon this point, I'll tell ye
How best to grease your jaws and stuff your belly.

'If I could only show you how I baste,
If you could see me turn the spit and ladle,
You'd swear I had a most consummate taste!—
Of what ingredients are black-puddings made all?
Not to be burned, and not to run to waste,
Not over-hot nor frozen in the cradle,
Done to a turn, juicy, not bathed in butter,
Smooth, plump and swelling!—Don't you hear 'em sputter?

'About fried liver now receive my say:
It wants five pieces—count them on your fingers;
It must be round—keep this in mind, I pray!—
Fire on this side or that the frying injures!
Be careful not to brush the fat away,
Which keeps the stew soft while it drops and lingers;
You must divide it in two parts, and see
That each part is apportioned equally.

'It should not be too large; but there's a saw—
Stint not your bag-pudding of hose and jacket:
Now mark me, for I'm laying down the law—
Don't overcook the morsel in the packet;
It ought to melt, midway twixt done and raw,
Like a ripe autumn fig, when you attack it:
Serve it up hissing, and then sound the tabors
With spice and orange peel, to end your labours!

'I've got a hundred hints to give the wary!
But take it on my word, ragouts and pies
Are the true test of science culinary:
A lamprey now—you'd scarce believe your eyes

To see its stews and salmis, how they vary!
Yet all are known and numbered by the wise.—
True gourmandise hath seventy-two divisions,
Besides a few that are my own additions:

'If one be missed, the cooking's spoiled, that's granted:
Not heaven itself can save a ruined platter!—
From now till noon I'd hold your sense enchanted
With secrets of my art, if I dared chatter!—
I kept an inn at Corinth once, and wanted
To argue publicly upon the matter.—
But we must leave this point, for 'twill divert you
To hear about another cardinal virtue.

'Only to F these confidences carry;
Just think what 'twill be when we come to R!
I plough (no nonsense) with ass, cassiowary,
Ox, camel—any other beast bizarre.
A thousand bonfires, prisons, by Lord Harry,
My tricks have earned, and something uglier far:
Where my head will not pass, I stick my tail in,
And what I like 's to hear the good folk railing.

'Take me to balls, to banquets, for an airing;
I'll do my duty there with hands and feet:
I'm rude, importunate, a bore, and daring;
On friends no less than foes I'll take a seat:
To shame I've said farewell, nor am I sparing
Of fawning like a cur when kicks I meet,
But tell my tale and swagger up and down,
And with a thousand fibs each exploit crown.

'No need to ask if I've kept geese at grass,
Purveyed stewed prunes, taught kittens how to play.
Suppose a thousand—widow, wife, and lass:
That's just about my figure, I dare say.
When mid the women by mishap I pass,
Six out of every five become my prey;
I make the pretty dears so deucéd cunning,
They beat nurse, maid, duenna out of running.

'Three of my moral qualities are these—
Gluttony, dicing, as I said, and drinking:
But, since we'll drain the barrel to the lees,
Hear now the fourth and foremost to my thinking.
No need of hooks or ladders, crows or keys,
I promise, where my hands are! Without blinking
I've worn the cross and mitre on my forehead—
No pope's nor priest's, but something much more horrid!

'Screws, files and jemmies are my stock in trade,
Springs, picklocks, of more sorts than I could mention;
Rope and wood ladders, levers, slippers made
Of noiseless felt—my patented invention—
Drowsing all ears, where'er my feet are laid;
I fashioned them to take my mind's intention;
Fire too that by itself no light delivers,
But when I spit on it, springs up and quivers.

'See me but in a church alone and frisky!
I'm keener on the robbing of an altar
Than gaugers when they scent a keg of whisky;
Then to the alms-box off I fly, nor falter:
Sacristies are my passion; though 'tis risky,
With cross and sacring cup I never palter,
But pull the crucifixes down and stow 'em—
Virgins and saints and effigies, you know 'em!

'I've swept, may-be, a hen-roost in my day;
And if you'd seen me loot a lot of washing,
You'd swear that never maid or housewife gay
Could clear it in a style so smart and dashing!
If nought, Morgante, 's left but blooming May
To strip, I steal it—I can't keep from flashing!
I ne'er drew difference twixt thine and mine:
All things, to start with, were effects divine.

'But ere I learned to thieve thus on the sly,
I ran the highway rig as bold as any;
I would have robbed the biggest saint on high—
If there *are* saints above us—for a penny;

But loving peace and fair tranquillity,
I left assassination to the many:
Not that my will was weak—I'd rather say,
Because theft mixed with murder does not pay.

'My virtues theological now smile on!
God knows if I can forge or falsify:
I'll turn an H into a Greek Upsilon—
You could not write a neater, prettier Y!
I gut the pages of a book, and pile on
New rubrics for new chapters, change the die,
Change title, cover, index, name—the poet
Who wrote the verse I counterfeit, won't know it.

'False oaths and perjuries come trickling down
Out of my mouth as smooth and sweet as honey,
Ripe figs, or macaroni nicely brown,
Or anything that's natural and funny:
Suppose they brain some guileless count or clown;
All's one; ware heads, I cry, and pouch my money!
I've set on foot full many a strife and wrangle,
And left 'em in inextricable tangle.

'With ready coin I always square a scandal:
Of oaths I've got a perfect stock in trade;
Each saint supplies my speech with some choice handle;
I run them off in rows from A to Z:
In lying no man holds to me a candle;
Truth's always the reverse of what I've said:—
I'd like to see more fire than land or water,
In heaven and earth nought but plague, famine, slaughter.

'Don't fancy that in fasting, prayer and prate,
Or charities my spare time I employ!
Not to seem stiff, I beg from gate to gate,
And alway utter something to annoy:
Proud, envious, tiresome and importunate—
This character I've cherished from a boy;
For the seven deadly sins and all the other
Vices have brought me up to be their brother!

'So that I'd roam the world, cross ban and border,
Hood-winked, nor ever fear to miss my way;
As sweet and clean as any lump of ordure,
I leave my trail like slugs where'er I stray,
Nor seek to hide that slimy self-recorder:
Creeds, customs, friends I slough from day to day;
Change skin and climate, as it suits me best,
For I was evil even in the nest.

'I've left a whole long chapter undiscussed
Of countless peccadilloes in a jumble:
Were I to catalogue each crime and lust,
The medley of my sins might make you grumble:
'Twould take from now till June to lay the dust,
If in this mud-heap we began to tumble;
One only point I'd have you still perpend—
I never in my life betrayed a friend.'

MORGANTE XXV. 119.

There is a spirit, Astarotte hight,
Wise, terrible, and fierce exceedingly;
In Hell's dark caves profound he hides from sight:
No goblin, but a fiend far blacker he.—
Malgigi summoned him one deep midnight,
And cried: 'How fares Rinaldo, tell to me!
Then will I say what more I'd have thee work;
But look not on me with a face so mirk!

'If thou wilt do this bidding, I declare
I'll never call nor conjure thee by force,
But burn upon my death yon book, I swear,
Which can alone compel thee in due course:
So shalt thou live thenceforward free as air.'—
Thereat the fiend swaggered, and had recourse
To threatening wiles, and would not yield an inch,
If haply he could make the master flinch.

But when he saw Malgigi's blood was stirred,
In act to flash the ring of his dread art,
And hurl him to some tomb by book and word,
He threw his cards up with a sudden start,

And cried: 'Of your will yet I've nothing heard.'
Then Malagigi answered: 'In what part
Are Ricciardetto and Rinaldo now?
Tell all the truth, or you'll repent, I vow!'

MORGANTE XXV. 135.

Said Astarot: 'This point remains obscure,
Unless I thought the whole night through thereon;
Nor would my best of judgments be secure;—
The paths of heaven for us are all undone,
Our sight of things to be is no more sure
Than that of sages gazing on the sun;
For neither man nor beast would 'scape from Hell,
Had not our wings been shortened when we fell.

'Of the Old Testament I've much to teach,
And of what happened in the days gone by;
But all things do not come within our reach:
One only Power there is, who sees on high,
As in a glass before him, all and each,
Past, present, and remote futurity:
He who made all that is, alone knows all,
Nor doth the Son well know what shall befall.

'Therefore I could not without thought intense
Tell thee the destined fate of Charlemain:—
Know that the air around us now is dense
With spirits; in their hands I see them strain
Astrolabe, almanac, and tablet, whence
To read yon signs in heaven of strife and bane—
The blood and treason, overthrow and war,
Menaced by Mars in Scorpio angular.

'And for thy better understanding, he
Is joined with Saturn in the ascendant, so
Charged with all-powerful malignity
That e'en the wars of Turnus had less woe.
Slaughters of many peoples we shall see,
With dire disasters in confusion flow,
And change of states and mighty realms; for I
Know that these signs were never wont to lie.

'I know not whether thou hast fixed thy thought
Upon those comets which appeared of late,
Veru and Dominus and Ascon, brought
Treasons and wars and strife to indicate,
With deaths of princes and great nobles fraught?
These, too, ne'er falsified the word of fate.
So that it seems from what I learn and see,
That what I say, and worse, is like to be.

'What Gano with Marsilio planned before,'
I know not, since I did not think thereon:
But he's the same, methinks, he was of yore;
Wherefore this needs no divination:
A seat is waiting for him at hell's core;
And if his life's book I correctly con,
That evil soul will very shortly go
To weep his sins in everlasting woe.'

Then spake Malgigi: 'Something thou hast said
Which holds my sense and reason still in doubt,
That some things even from the Son are hid;
This thy dark saying I can fathom not.'
Then Astarotte: 'Thou, it seems, hast read
But ill thy Bible, or its words forgot;
For when the Son was asked of that great day,
Only the Father knows, He then did say.

'Mark my words, Malagigi! Thou shalt hear,
Now if thou wilt, the fiend's theology:
Then to thy churchmen go, and make it clear.
You say: Three Persons in one entity,
One substance; and to this we, too, adhere:
One flawless, pure, unmixed activity:—
Wherefore it follows from what went before,
That this alone is what you all adore.

'One mover, whence all movement is impelled;
One order, whence all order hath its rise;
One cause, whereby all causes are compelled;
One power, whence flow all powers and energies;

One fire, wherein all radiances are held ;
One principle, which every truth implies ;
One knowledge, whence all wisdom hath been given ;
One Good, which made all good in earth and heaven.

'This is that Father and that ancient King,
Who hath made all things and can all things know,
But cannot change His own wise ordering,
Else heaven and earth to ruin both would go.
Having lost His friendship, I no more may wing
My flight unto the mirror, where our woe
Perchance e'en now is clearly shown to view ;
Albeit futurity I never knew.

'If Lucifer had known the doom to be,
He had not brought those fruits of rashness forth ;
Nor had he ruined for eternity,
Seeking his princely station in the North ;
But being impotent all things to see,
He and we all were damned 'neath heaven and earth ;
And since he was the first to sin, he first
Fell to Giudecca, and still fares the worst.

'Nor had we vainly tempted all the blest,
Who now sit crowned with stars in Paradise,
If, as I said, a veil by God's behest
Had not been drawn before our mental eyes;
Nor would that Saint, of Saints the first and best
Been tempted, as your Gospel testifies,
And borne by Satan to the pinnacle
Where at the last he saw His miracle.

'And forasmuch as He makes nothing ill,
And all hath circumscribed by fixed decrees,
And what He made is present with Him still,
Being established on just premisses,
Know that this Lord repents not of His will;
Nay, if one saith that change hath been, he sees
Falsehood for truth, in sense and judgment blind
For what is now, was in the primal mind.'

'Tell me,' then answered Malagigi, 'more,
Since thou'rt an angel sage and rational!
If that first Mover, whom we all adore,
Within His secret soul foreknew your fall,
If time and hour were both foreseen before,
His sentence must be found tyrannical,
Lacking both justice and true charity;
Since, while creating, and while damning, He

'Foreknew you to be frail and formed in sin;
Nathless you call Him just and piteous,
Nor was there room, you say, pardon to win:—
This makes our God the partisan of those
Angels who stayed the gates of heaven within,
Who knew the true from false, discerning thus
Which side would prosper, which would lose the day,
Nor went, like you, with Lucifer astray.'

Astarot, like the devil, raged with pain;
Then cried: 'That just Sabaoth loved no more
Michael than Lucifer; nor made he Cain
More apt than Abel to shed brother's gore:
If one than Nimrod was more proud and vain,
If the other, all unlike to Gabriel, swore
He'd not repent nor bellow psalms to heaven,
It was free-will condemned both unforgiven.

'That was the single cause that damned us all:
His clemency, moreover, gave full time,
Wherein 'twas granted us to shun the fall,
And by repentance to compound our crime;
But now we've fallen from grace beyond recall:
Just was our sentence from that Judge sublime;
His foresight shortened not our day of grace,
For timely penitence aye finds a place.

'Just is the Father, Son, and just the Word!
His justice with great mercy was combined:
Through pride no more than thanklessness we erred;
That was our sin malignant and unkind:

Nor hath remorse our stubborn purpose stirred,
Seeing that evil nourished in the mind
And will of those who knew the good, and were
Untempted, never yet was changed to fair.

'Adam knew not the nature of his sin;
Therefore his primal error was forgiven,
Because the tempter took him in a gin:
Only his disobedience angered heaven;
Therefore, though cast from Eden, he might win
Grace, when repentance from his heart had driven
The wicked will, with peace to end his strife,
And mercy also in eternal life.

'But the angelic nature, once debased,
Can never more to purity return:
It sinned with science and corrupted taste:
Whence in despair incurable we burn.
Now, if that wise one answered not, nor raised
His voice, when Pilate asked of him to learn
What was the truth, the truth was at his side;
This ignorance was therefore justified.

'Pilate was lost, because in doing well
He persevered not when he washed his hand;
And Judas, too, beyond redemption fell,
Because, though penitent at last, he banned
Hope, without which no soul escapes from hell:
His doom no Origen shall countermand,
Nor who to Judas give what's meant for Judah—
In diebus illis salvabitur Juda.

'Thus there is one first Power in heaven who knew
All things, by whom all things were also made:
Making and damning us, He still was true;
On Truth and Justice all His work is laid:
Future and past are present to his view;
For it must follow, as I elsewhere said,
That the whole world before His face should lie,
From whom proceeds force, virtue, energy.

'But now that thou hast bound me to relate,
My master thou, the cause of our mischance,
Thou fain would'st hear why He who rules o'er fate,
And of our fall foresaw each circumstance,
Laboured in vain, and made us reprobate?—
Sealed is that rubric, closed from every glance,
Reserved for Him, the Lord victorious:
I know not, I can only answer thus!

'Nor speak I this to put thy mind to proof;
But forasmuch as I discern that men
Weave on this warp of doubts a misty woof,
Seeking to learn; albeit they cannot ken
Whence flows the Nile—the Danube's not enough!
Assure thy soul, nor ask the how and when,
That heaven's high Master, as the Psalmist taught,
Is just and true in all that he hath wrought.

'The things whereof I speak are known not by
Poet or prophet, moralist or sage:
Yet mortal men in their presumption try
To rank the hierarchies, stage over stage!
A chieftain among Seraphim was I;
Yet knew not what in many a learnéd page
Denys and Gregory wrote!—Full surely they
Who paint heaven after earth will go astray!

'But above all things see thou art not led
By elves and wandering sprites, a tricksy kind,
Who never speak one word of truth, but shed
Doubt and suspicion on the hearer's mind;
Their aim is injury toward fools ill-sped:
And, mark this well, they ne'er have been confined
To glass or water, but reside in air,
Playing their pranks here, there, and everywhere.

'From ear to ear they pass, and 'tis their vaunt
Ever to make things seem that are not so:
For one delights in horseplay, jeer and jaunt;
One deals in science; one pretends to show

Where treasures lurk in some forgotten haunt:
Others, more grave, futurity foreknow:—
But now I've given thee hints enough, to tell
That courtesy can even be found in Hell!'

MORGANTE XXV. 282.

And when Rinaldo had learned all his need,
'Astarot,' he cried, 'thou art a perfect friend,
And I am bound to thee henceforth indeed!
This I say truly: if God's will should bend,
If grace divine should e'er so much concede
As to reverse heaven's ordinance, amend
Its statutes, sentences, or high decrees,
I will remember these thy services.

'More at the present time I cannot give:
The soul returns to Him from whom it flew:
The rest of us, thou knowest, will not live!
O love supreme, rare courtesy and new.'—
I have no doubt that all my friends believe
This verse belongs to Petrarch; yet 'tis true
Rinaldo spoke it very long ago:
But who robs not, is called a rogue, you know.—

Said Astarotte: 'Thanks for your good will!
Yet shall those keys be lost for us for ever:
High treason was our crime, measureless ill.
Thrice happy Christians! One small tear can sever
Your bonds!—One sigh, sent from the contrite will:
Lord, to Thee only did I sin!—But never
Shall *we* find grace: we sinned once; now we lie
Sentenced to hell for all eternity.

'If after, say, some thousand million ages
We might have hope yet once to see again
The least spark of that Love, this pang that rages
Here at the core, could scarce be reckoned pain!—
But wherefore annotate such dreary pages?
To wish for what can never be, is vain.
Therefore I mean with your kind approbation
To change the subject of our conversation.'

MORGANTE XXV. 73.

What God ordains is no chance miracle.
Next prodigies and signs in heaven were seen ;
For the sun suddenly turned ghastly pale,
And clouds with rain o'erladen flew between,
Muttering low prelude to their thunder-knell,
As when Jove shakes the world with awful spleen :
Next wind and fury, hail and tempest, hiss
O'er earth and skies—Good God, what doom is this?

Then while they cowered together dumb with dread,
Lightning flashed forth and hurtled at their side,
Which struck a laurel's leaf-embowered head,
And burned it ; cleft unto the earth, it died.
O Phœbus! yon fair curls of gold outspread!
How could'st thou bear to see thy love, thy pride,
Thus thunder-smitten? Hath thy sacred bay
Lost her inviolable rights to-day?

Marsilio cries: 'Mahound! What can it mean!
What doleful mystery lies hid beneath?
O Bianciardino, to our State, I ween,
This omen brings some threat of change or death!'
But, while he spoke, an earthquake shook the scene,
Nay, shook both hemispheres with blustering breath :
Falseron's face changed hue, grew cold and hot,
And even Bianciardino liked it not.

Yet none for very fear dared move a limb,
The while above their heads a sudden flush
Spread like live fire, that made the daylight dim ;
And from the fount they saw the water gush
In gouts and crimson eddies from the brim ;
And what it sprinkled, with a livid flush
Burned : yea, the grass flared up on every side ;
For the well boiled, a fierce and sanguine tide.

Above the fountain rose a locust-tree,
The tree where Judas hanged himself, 'tis said ;
This turned the heart of Gano sick to see,
For now it ran with ruddy sweat and bled,

Then dried both trunk and branches suddenly,
Moulting its scattered leaves by hundreds dead;
And on his pate a bean came tumbling down,
Which made the hairs all bristle on his crown.

The beasts who roamed at will within the park,
Set up a dismal howl and wail of woe;
Then turned and rushed amuck with yelp and bark,
Butting their horns and charging to and fro:
Marsilio and his comrades in the dark
Watched all dismayed to see how things would go;
And none knew well what he should say or do,
So dreadful was heaven's wrath upon the crew.

MORGANTE XXV. 115.

I had it in my mind once to curtail
This story, knowing not how I should bring
Rinaldo all that way to Roncesvale,
Until an angel straight from heaven did wing,
And showed me Arnald to recruit my tale:
He cries, 'Hold, Louis! Wherefore cease to sing?
Perchance Rinaldo will turn up in time!'
So, just as he narrates, I'll trim my rhyme.

I must ride straight as any arrow flies,
Nor mix a fib with all the truths I say;
This is no story to be stuffed with lies!
If I diverge a hand's breadth from the way,
One croaks, one scolds, while everybody cries,
'Ware madman!' when he sees me trip or stray.
I've made my mind up to a hermit's life,
So irksome are the crowd and all their strife.

Erewhile my Academe and my Gymnasia
Were in the solitary woods I love,
Whence I can see at will Africa or Asia;
There nymphs with baskets tripping through the grove,
Shower jonquils at my feet or colocasia:
Far from the town's vexations there I'd rove,
Haunting no more your Areopagi,
Where folk delight in calumny and lie.

MORGANTE XXVII. 6.

Then answered Baldwin: 'If my sire in sooth
Hath brought us here by treason, as you say,
Should I survive this battle, by God's truth,
With this good sword I will my father slay!—
But, Roland, I'm no traitor—I forsooth,
Who followed thee with love as clear as day!—
How could'st thou fling worse insult on thy friend?'
Then with fierce force the mantle he did rend,

And cried: 'I will return into the fight,
Since thou hast branded me with treason, thou!
I am no traitor! May God give me might,
As living thou shalt see me ne'er from now!'
Straight toward the Paynim battle spurs the knight,
Still shouting, 'Thou hast done me wrong, I vow!'
Roland repents him of the words he spake,
When the youth, mad with passion, from him brake.

MORGANTE XXVIII. 138.

I ask not for that wreath of bay or laurel
Which on Greek brows or Roman proudly shone:
With this plain quill and style I do not quarrel,
Nor have I sought to sing of Helicon:
My Pegasus is but a rustic sorrel;
Untutored mid the groves I still pipe on:
Leave me to chat with Corydon and Thyrsis;
I'm no good shepherd, and can't mend my verses.

Indeed I'm not a rash intrusive claimant,
Like the mad piper of those ancient days,
From whom Apollo stripped his living raiment,
Nor quite the Satyr that my face bewrays.
A nobler bard shall rise and win the payment
Fame showers on loftier style and worthier lays:
While I mid beech-woods and plain herdsmen dwell,
Who love the rural muse of Pulci well.

I'll tempt the waters in my little wherry,
Seeking safe shallows where a skiff may swim:
My only care is how to make men merry
With these thick-crowding thoughts that take my whim:
'Tis right that all things in this world should vary;—
Various are wits and faces, stout and slim,
One dotes on white, while one dubs black sublime,
And subjects vary both in prose and rhyme.

APPENDIX VI.

Translations of Elegiac Verses by Girolamo Benivieni and Michelangelo Buonarroti.

(See page 321.)

The heavenly sound is hushed, from earth is riven
The harmony of that delightful lyre,
Which leaves the world in grief, to gladden heaven.
Yea, even as our sobs from earth aspire,
Mourning his loss, so ring the jocund skies
With those new songs, and dance the angelic choir.
Ah happy he, who from this vale of sighs,
Poisonous and dark, heavenward hath flown, and lost
Only the vesture, frail and weak, that dies!
Freed from the world, freed from the tempest-tossed
Warfare of sin, his splendour now doth gaze
Full on the face of God through endless days.

Thou'rt dead of dying, and art made divine;
Nor need'st thou fear to change or life or will;
Wherefore my soul well-nigh doth envy thine.
Fortune and time across thy threshold still
Shall dare not pass, the which mid us below
Bring doubtful joyance blent with certain ill.
Clouds are there none to dim for thee heaven's glow;
The measured hours compel not thee at all;
Chance or necessity thou canst not know.
Thy splendour wanes not when our night doth fall,
Nor waxes with day's light however clear,
Nor when our suns the season's warmth recall.

END OF THE FIRST PART.

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